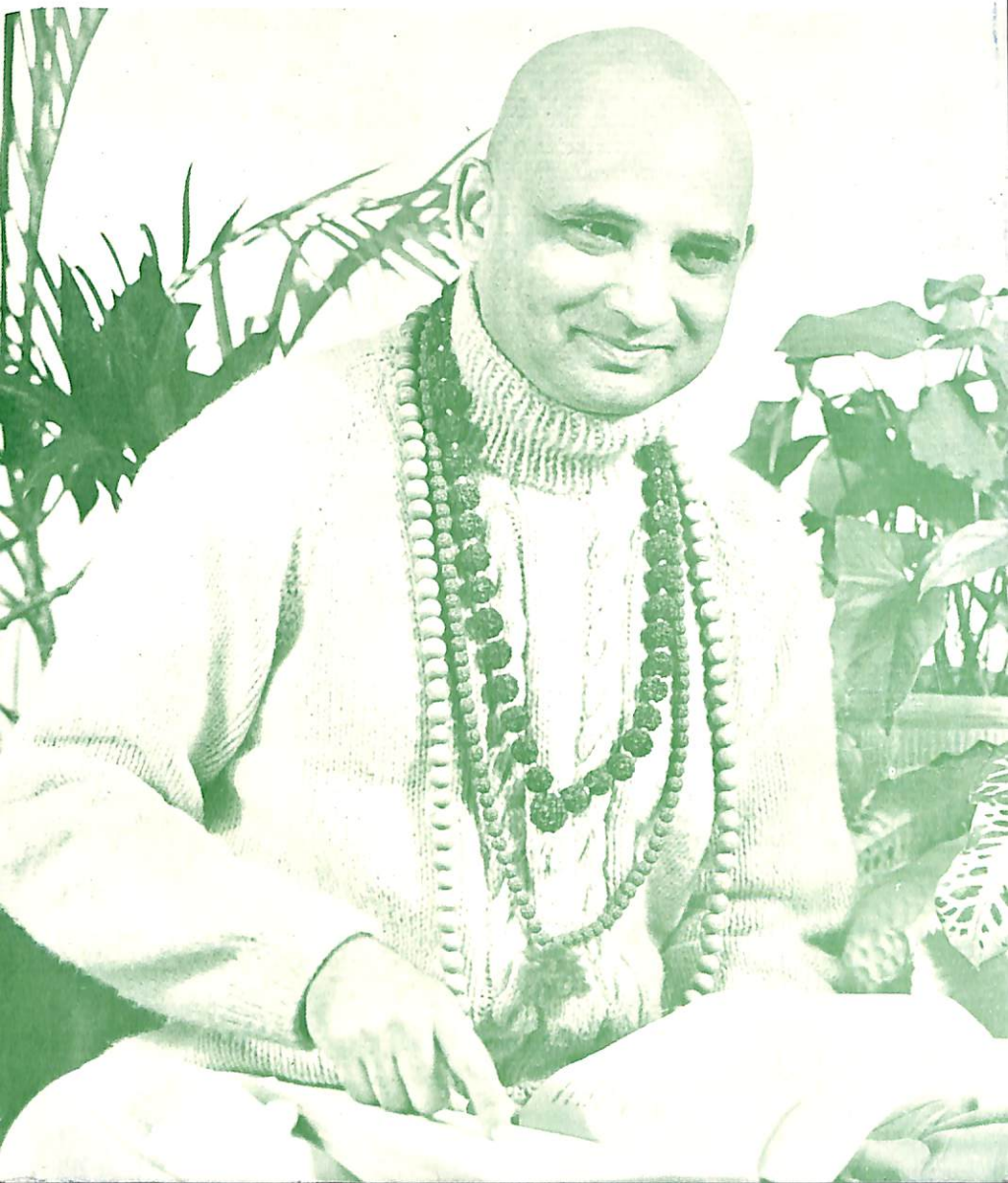


YOGA VASISTHA

by Swami Jyotirmayananda

Vol. VI: Nirvana Prakarana Uttarardha



**YOGA
VĀSISṬHA
VOL. VI**

**NIRVĀNA PRAKĀRANA
UTTARĀRDHA**

by Swami Jyotirmayananda

YOGA RESEARCH FOUNDATION
(Non-profit Organization)

AIMS AND OBJECTS

1. To spread the laws of spiritual life.
 2. To promote understanding of the unity of life among all people, regardless of race, sect, creed and sex, and also to promote harmony among all religions by emphasizing the fundamental unity of all prophets, saints, sages and teachers.
 3. To help suffering humanity by teaching the higher moral standards, prayers and meditation.
 4. To give regular classes in the teachings of Yoga, Vedanta and Indian Philosophy.
 5. To promote Universal Peace and Universal Love.
 6. To promote the cultural growth of humanity on the basis of everlasting spiritual values of life.
 7. To guide students and devotees all over the world.
 8. To print and publish spiritual literature.
 9. Anyone devoted to the ideals of truth, non-violence and purity can be a member of this Foundation.
-

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Yoga Research Foundation
5691 SW 102 Avenue
Miami, Florida, USA 33155

Mailing Address:
6111 SW 74th Avenue
Miami, Florida, USA 33143

ISBN 0-934664-35-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2004118417

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**YOGA
VĀSISTHA
VOL. VI**



DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to Sri Swami Lalitananda, the Vice-president of the Yoga Research Foundation, who is the illustrious author of *Yoga in Life*, editor of the *International Yoga Guide*, as well as the poet-composer of *Yoga Mystic Songs for Meditation* in 12 volumes.

It was the dispassion and intense aspiration of Sri Swami Lalitananda that resulted in my giving the complete series of lectures on *Yoga Vasistha* as well as the writing of this present book.

The vast work of promoting my teachings and works in the West has been carried on untiringly, with an unassuming zeal and utter self-effacement, by this noble *sanyasin* for over thirty years. The spiritual world will ever remain deeply indebted to her for the formation and existence of the mighty organization—the Yoga Research Foundation—which is a fountainsource of light and wisdom for spiritual aspirants all over the world.

May God bless her abundantly!

Swami Jyotirmayananda

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Yoga Vasistha can bring a complete transformation in the human personality. Like the beggar in an old fairy tale who turned into a king when a charmed golden ring fell into his hand, anyone who turns the pages of this book with an inquisitive mind and a heart searching for the truth will discover the infinite beauty of his inner Self. Yoga Vasistha nourishes the soul and awakens a yearning for freedom and an exquisite peace unknown before.

This unique book par excellence has been long awaited by advanced Vedantins and yogis of India because it is only available in rare editions of the last century. And it is what the enquiring minds of the West have been desperately needing since they heard the remarks of Schopenhauer: "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life; it will be the solace of my death."

H.H. Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda, internationally known lecturer and writer of over fifty books on Yoga and Vedanta philosophy, has been interpreting and commenting on Yoga Vasistha for over fifty years: first in India for nine years at the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy, Sivananda Ashram, Ludhiana, and other parts of India, and also in the Dehradun Women's College. Since coming to

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

the West, Swamiji lectured in Puerto Rico for six years, and now gives weekly lectures here in Miami. Available on cassette tapes, CDs and DVDs, these lectures are an undying treasure.

King Shah Jehan had the choice of only one type of food-grain while he was imprisoned for life, and he chose the garbanzo because of its nourishment and adaptability to a variety of tasty dishes. So too, if I could have only one book for some extraordinary reason to read for the rest of my life, I would choose Yoga Vasistha. After a brief encounter with Yoga Vasistha, the reader will feel that all other books of philosophy have become like old crumbs on the table, while Yoga Vasistha stands like the sweet and vitalizing elixir of life.

Unfortunately, however, due to the lack of knowledge of Yoga Vasistha, the intelligentsia of the West have been unable to realize the vast treasure of profound knowledge that lies hidden in this great work. For this reason, the wisdom of Vedanta has not been understood and assimilated by them.

Yoga Vasistha encompasses in its powerful writings the dramatic stories of the inner states of the mind, and like a brilliant advocate, presents its brief with a convincing voice and expert phrasing. Yoga Vasistha has a mystic strategy that convinces the mind to undermine its fancies and imaginations, leading to the realization that the world lies within the mind. Nothing is more inspiring

and soul-stirring than when the mind lifts itself from the quagmire of false perceptions of the senses and sees the contents of waking, dream and deep sleep as the refraction of the Light of Consciousness filtering through the layers of egoistic illusions.

The awe-inspiring awakening of the knowledge that "You are not this body, not this mind, and not this intellect" is uplifting and produces a vital change in the overall perception of the world. It is for this reason that sages warn immature aspirants against the wrong interpretations of this grand philosophy; they emphasize the fact that the wisdom of Yoga Vasistha must be received under the guidance of an illumined teacher. For those who are endowed with a mighty strength of intellect and intense dispassion, Yoga Vasistha brings for them the clouds of mystic understanding that burst into the flood of unique bliss.

The greatest scriptures of the world have always blended parables, illustrations and stories to bring about a striking impression — like a flash of lightning upon the sleeping mind in order to awaken it sharply to the light of the truth. Yoga Vasistha abounds with these. Yoga Vasistha, in its broad spectrum, encompasses topics such as the mysteries of the soul, death and reincarnation, the subtle operations of the unconscious mind which bring about repeated embodiments, psychic powers, the mystic energy known as Kundalini, and the techniques of spiritual enquiry and meditation. A studious reader,

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therefore, will meet for the first time a challenge to his intellect to discover the secret wealth of the Self and to explore the mysteries of the mind.

It is to be noted that humor and wit permeate the writings and lectures of Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda, like a green creeper adorning the tree of Liberation. But behind this, Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda gives to the world his most memorable writing which has been guarded as a secret mystic wealth by the sages of India for a long time. This book by Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda presents you with the key to heavenly bliss and perfection, and every page of this book is filled with his blessings.

May the golden sun of your eternal Self rise from behind the horizon of distractions and mental limitations and encompass you in the greatest beauty and sublime love, which are the very essence of your real Self!

Swami Lalitananda

This publication is dedicated:

**to Srimati Khubia Persaud
of Toronto, Canada,
in loving celebration of her 88th birthday
and gratitude from her loving children:
(Betty, Gajaindri (Lily), Pulastya (Peter), Bhagwandai,
Endra, Vidya, Leela, Leelkhanth (Prakash))
daughter-in-law: Nadira
grandchildren: (Suresh, Pravesch, Aryta, Roma, Krishna,
Sunil, Nanda, Nicky, Robin, Natasha, Rohan) and
great grandchildren: (Ramona, Alicia, Ian Govind, Satya,
Shivani, Reishma, Sanjay, Rajeev, Smita, Mira)**

**by Dr. Vasanti Puranik & Dr. Subhash Puranik,
Plantation, Florida,
in loving memory of their
parents and grandparents:**

Sri Ramachandra Govind Puranik
Srimati Seetadevi Ramachandra Puranik
Poona, Maharashtra, India

Sri Govind Vyankatesh Puranik
Srimati Lakshmibai Govind Puranik
Jamkhandi, Bijapur, Maharashtra, India

Sri Amritrao Tuljopant Phadnis
Srimati Ahilyabai Amritrao Phadnis
Aundh, Satara, Maharashtra, India

Sri Chintamani Vishvanath Joag
Srimati Kamal Chintamani Joag.
Poona, Maharashtra, India

Sri Vishvanath Keshav Joag
Srimati Gangabai Vishvanath Joag
Poona, Maharashtra, India

Sri Shankar Ramachandra Kanitkar
Srimati Umabai Shankar Kanitkar
Poona, Maharashtra, India

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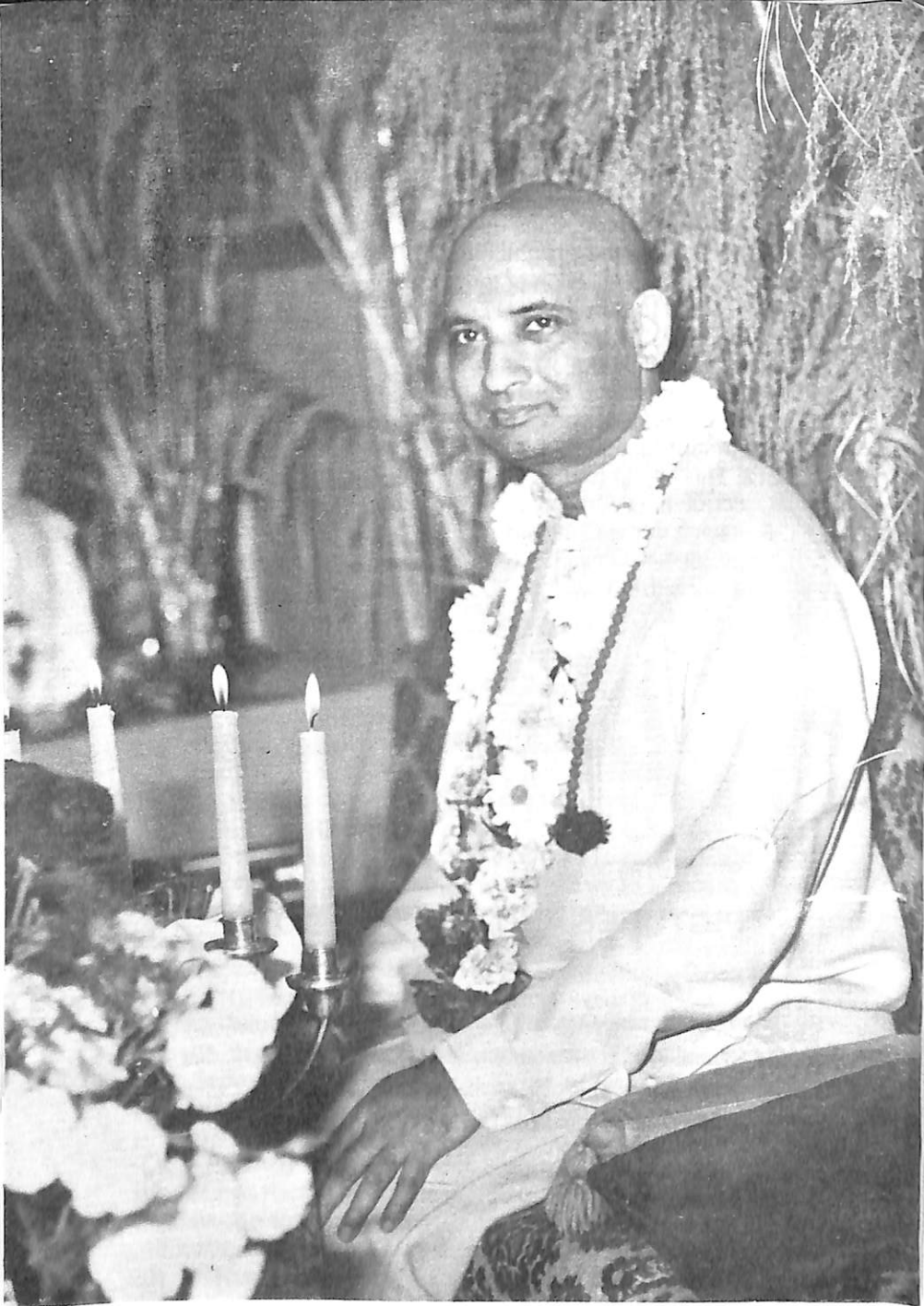
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Author Swami Jyotirmayananda

INTRODUCTION

In the “Bala-Kanda” section of the *Ramayana* it is stated that Sri Rama was given spiritual instructions by Sage Vasistha. *Yoga Vasistha*, a complete and separate work in itself, is that teaching. While the *Ramayana*, the epic poem more popularly known throughout India and the world, describes the life and adventures of Sri Rama, *Yoga Vasistha* presents his inner realization in detail for those who wish to intensify their spiritual life and deepen their understanding. A vast work of approximately 32,000 verses, *Yoga Vasistha* was written by the great poet-sage Valmiki, as was the *Ramayana*, about 500 B.C. or earlier.

Yoga Vasistha, which is virtually unknown in the West due to the scarcity of its English translations, is also known by the names of *Maha-Ramayana*, *Uttar Ramayana*, *Arsha Ramayana*, *Jnana Vasistha*, *Vasistha Ramayana*, and *Vasistha*. But whatever you choose to call it, it is the earliest detailed work of Yoga-Vedanta and gives a magnificent exposition of the subtleties and insights of that philosophy with a majestic sweep that has never been equaled in any metaphysical work since.

Every kind of exposition is employed in its presentation—didactic instructions, answers to doubts, parables, and stories within stories. Here, for example, the interlocking

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system of stories within stories enhances the vision of worlds within world, and of the infinitely complex world of the mind, itself arising from the Cosmic Mind. Many key points of this metaphysical instruction are touched upon over and over again with increasingly deeper meanings. Therefore the work appears to move in vast spirals, ultimately culminating in the Self-realization of Sri Rama.

In "Vairagya Prakarana" of Volume I it will be remembered that Sage Vasistha asked Sri Rama to express the reasons for his depressed state of mind. At this, Sri Rama elaborated upon the transiency and essencelessness of all objects of the world. All that he once thought to be of value and a source of happiness has, through the vision of his penetrative intellect, become nothing but a source of emptiness and misery.

In the first chapter, therefore, Sri Rama has taken what are normally the most value aspects of life and has shown how illusory they are. The purpose here is to promote dispassion (*vairagya*) in the aspirant. Such *vairagya* considers all pleasures of the world, from the lowest form of life to the highest—that of Brahma the Creator—as insignificant and illusory. This is the first and fundamental requirement on the path of wisdom that leads to Self-realization.

In the second chapter, "Mumukshu Prakarana," it has been shown that certain qualifications are necessary for an aspirant before he can effectively move on the path towards that state of immortality or Self-realization. Sage Vasistha, therefore, elaborated on the four most important

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qualifications—those of serenity, contentment, spiritual enquiry and good association.

In addition, “Mumukshu Prakarana” elaborated on how the aspirant should not rely on destiny, but rather on his own self-effort. The Self within is unlimited, and each person has that same potential within—all that is needed to unlock that infinite potential and creativity is repeated self-effort.

In the third chapter, “Utpatti Prakarana,” Sage Vasistha has shown how the world has evolved from and is sustained by the Absolute through the limitations of the mind. And since the world is merely a projection of the mind conditioned by ignorance, when ignorance is overcome by intuitive wisdom, mind rediscovers its unity with the Cosmic Mind and the individual merges into the Absolute. At this point, the entire world-process is remembered to be nothing but a long dream of the mind from which one has awakened.

The fourth chapter, “Sthiti Prakarana,” aims at steady-ing the knowledge of the Self. Giving insight into the amazing powers of the mind, Sage Vasistha explains that it is the impure mind that causes bondage, while it is the pure mind that gives Liberation. It is *Brahman* who has assumed the role of *jiva* (an individual soul) due to the intensification of *vasanas* (subtle desires). When freed of the *vasanas*, the *jiva* returns to its essential nature—*Brahman*. Just as with the dissolution of clouds the sun is fully revealed in the sky, so too, with the dissolution of *vasanas* the knowledge of the Self becomes fully established in one’s heart.

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In the fifth chapter, “Upashama Prakarana,” Sage Vasistha deals with the topic of the quiescence of the mind. With increasing insight into the falsity of the world-process, the subtle desires of an aspirant begin to dissolve. Consequently, his consciousness goes on expanding until he is fully established in Self-realization. It is *vichar* or spiritual enquiry which enlightens his mind. *Vichar* can be practised by anyone whether he is a king like Janaka or an ascetic like Veethavya. Even demoniac personalities touched by the magic wand of *vichar* may become transformed into enlightened sages. In an eloquent style, abounding with stories and parables, Sage Vasistha gives a profound insight into the mystic art of *vichar*, which, having reached its maturity, blossoms into the intuitional realization of the Self.

In our second volume we covered “Utpatti Prakarana” (sections 66 to 122), the entire “Sthiti Prakarana” and a portion of “Upashama Prakarana” (sections 1 to 13). In the third volume we covered the balance of “Upashama Prakarana” from section 14 to section 93.

The sixth and last chapter of *Yoga Vasistha* is “Nirvana Prakarana,” which is further divided into two parts: “Purvardha” (first half) and “Uttarardha” (second half). In the fourth volume, we explored sections 1 to 110 of “Nirvana Prakarana—Purvardha.” In the fifth volume, we concluded “Nirvana Prakarana—Purvardha” and explored sections 1-94 of “Nirvana Prakarana—Uttarardha.” In this sixth and final volume, we conclude Sage Vasistha’s teachings, which carry the aspirant to the sublimest heights of Vedantic wisdom.



Sage Vasistha Imparts Spiritual Wisdom to Sri Rama

ॐ

तिष्ठंस्तदात्मनि परे विमलस्वभावे
सर्वात्मके तपति सर्वपदार्थमुक्तः ।
निर्वाणशान्तमतिरम्बरकोशकान्तो
धर्मेण राज्यमनुपालय तीर्णतृष्णः ॥

*Tishthans-tadaatmani pare vimala-swabhaave
Sarvaatmake tapati sarva-padaartha-muktah
Nirvaana-shaanta-matir-ambhar-kosh-kaanto
Dharmena raajyam-anupaalaya teerna-trishnah.*

O Ramachandra!

**Now since you are enlightened,
you abide in the taintless Atman that shines
everywhere. You are detached from all the
material objects of the world.
Therefore, immersed in the Bliss of the Self,
possessing the enlightened mind decked
with the Peace of Nirvana (Liberation),
endowed with the exquisite Beauty of the
Akasha (Ether) of Pure Consciousness,
liberated from all desires,
may you perform your duties
as a righteous king!**

Nirvana Prakarana: 213-49

**Sections 94-95— *Ghosts and Pishachas;
and the Rock of Pure Consciousness***

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, in the story of Pashanopakhyana, the world-within-a-rock, you related how you lost your physical body. Having lost your physical body, how did you travel back to the world of the *Saptarshis*?

Sri Vasistha replied: I will relate to you all that happened after I departed from the *siddha*. I went to the city of the celestial divinity, Indra. Because I had no physical body, no one was able to behold me, though I was able to see them.

My body was of the nature of the mind. I could pass through the gross objects of the world. I was devoid of the sense of touch. I existed like ghosts and *pishachas* (body-less spirits).

Just as your movements in your dream world are not perceived by others, my movements were not perceived by the celestial beings of the world of Indra.

O Rama, the *siddha* was able to see me. Being an enlightened soul, he was not identified with his physical body. Therefore, he could establish communication with me. In addition, I willed that the *siddha* should see me. A mind that is more powerful is able to influence a less powerful mind.

While roaming in the world of Indra, I forgot to bring a materialized expression of myself that could be visible to the inhabitants of Indra Loka. I was calling out to people of Indra's realm, but they were unable to hear me. I held out my

hand to touch people but could not do so. I was like a celestial *pishacha*.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, what are *pishachas*? How many kinds of *pishachas* are there? How do they conduct themselves without having physical bodies?

Sri Vasistha replied: *Pishachas* are body-less spirits. They sustain a mental projection of their body in their consciousness. Their hands, feet and different limbs are mentally imagined. They are evil spirits that torment living beings by drinking their blood and depriving them of their vital strength. However, they only hurt people in accordance with the karmas of those people. If one's karma does not permit a person to be affected by a *pishacha*, he will not come under its sway.

There are different kinds of *pishachas*. Some appear as clouds, some move along with the wind. It is difficult to catch them. Though they are void like the sky, they see each other and perceive certain specific forms of themselves. Conditioned by their own minds, they also experience hot and cold. However, they are unable to quench their thirst by drinking the physical form of water or satisfy their hunger by eating food.

They are afflicted with desire, anger, hatred, greed, delusion and all limitations of the mind. They are overcome by the power of mantra, by medicine, austerity, and virtuous acts such as charity and devotion.

O Rama, all living beings are essentially *Brahman*. *Brahman* appears as a *pishacha*, a god, a human being, an

animal or an inert object due to the modifications of the mind.

(By giving the illustration of the pishachas, Sage Vasistha explained the fact that even human beings do not live in a world of reality. Every human sees a world according to his mental structure. Objects perceived by a person are relative to his limited senses.

Pishachas are considered to exist in lakes and yet experience thirst. They dwell in the daylight yet experience darkness like owls. In the same way, all living beings exist in this mysterious world experiencing various sense perceptions in accordance with their mental structures. The world perceived at the plane of the senses is false. Brahman or the Absolute Existence alone is real.)

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, Brahma himself is of the nature of pure ether. His creation is like a dream existing within his mind. This world of ours is essentially the Pure Ether of the Self. When this intuitive truth is revealed, one realizes the utter folly of developing attachment, hatred, fear and misery with relation to the objects of the world.

In the vast field of *Chidakasha* (Pure Consciousness), there exists the clay of ignorance out of which various rocks have formed, inhabited by numerous world-systems. From an absolute point of view, ignorance is non-existent and all the rock-like seeds of the world-process are illusory.

However, out of these illusory rocks arise different classes of living beings—gods, demons, human beings, animals and other living beings.

Due to repeated affirmations of the mind, a person becomes unaware of the presence of his subtle body and becomes identified with a physical body, which is like a dream object.

Just as *pishachas* are able to experience utter darkness even in the broad daylight, all living beings experience different forms of the world-process even in the broad daylight of the non-dual Self.

Section 96—*The Self Expresses as the World-process*

Sri Vasistha said: The Self in man does not die. If it were so, the death of a person would have terminated the whole creation. When a person realizes that "I am the Pure Self. I am untouched by the various manifestations of matter," he becomes liberated from the cycles of birth and death.

An aspirant must practice the following affirmations in order to attain freedom from the world-process:

I am Pure Consciousness, purer than the vast sky. I am the eternal, all-pervading and taintless reality. There is no birth, death, or pleasure and pain in me.

I am taintless like the vast sky. This body, consisting of the five sheaths, does not belong to me. Whoever identifies with this body becomes the killer of the Self.

I am the Self, of the nature of Pure Awareness. The body,

mind and senses are not related to me in any way. Whoever attains the intuitional knowledge of the Self sees his ignorance destroyed and, as a result, attains freedom from all afflictions and sorrows.

I am established in the Immutable Atman. Therefore, I am free from all mental sorrows and miseries. Just as arrows cannot affect an invulnerable stone, in the same way, the miseries of the mind cannot affect Me—the Immutable Self.

I have negated this petty notion that "I am this body." Whoever adopts this mistaken notion destroys his strength, intelligence and valor. But, I abide in the Self; therefore strength, intelligence and valor increase in me day by day.

I am the Self—supremely pure and transcendental. The impurities of the mind in the form of greed, anger, hatred, egoism and passion do not exist in the Self. Therefore, since I am established in the Divine Self, how can they taint me?

The injunction that one must overcome greed, anger and other mental impurities applies to one who is identified with the body. Since I am established in the wisdom of the Self, even death is but a straw before me.

It is a great wonder that even great scholars are unable to rid themselves of the erroneous identification with the physical body. When threatened by death, they sink in grief as though they are going to be destroyed along with their body. But I am like the all-pervading Ether of Consciousness. Even the raging destruction at the time of cosmic dissolution becomes like a wreath of soft flowers to me.

One who says, "I am not the Self. I am just this body. Therefore, I am being destroyed," is able to cry at the loss of the body because his witnessing Self is the illuminer of his negative mentations. When wisdom dawns, all miseries of the mind seem like a humorous drama enacted by the mind.

Nothing is destroyed, nothing is born. When knowledge of the Self is lacking, it is the Self that reveals itself as the soul caught in the world-process. But when the knowledge of the Self is realized, it is the Self that destroys the illusion of the world-process and reveals itself as the state of liberation.

Section 97—*The Theories of Different Systems of Philosophy Derive Their Authenticity from the Almighty Self*

Sage Vasistha continued: Different philosophers hold different views. Whatever view they sustain in their mind with tenacity and intensity of mental concentration becomes their reality. This is due to the Self, which is all-powerful.

According to Kapila Muni, the Purusha or the Self is the non-doer and non-enjoyer. But *Prakriti* (Nature) performs all functions of the world-process. *Prakriti*, consisting of the three *gunas*, becomes the basis for pleasure, pain and illusion. This *Prakriti* has given rise to the world-process.

According to Vedantins, this world is an illusory modification of *Brahman*. The world does not exist in reality.

When one gains intuitional knowledge, the illusion of the world disappears from his view.

Those who follow the systems of Nyaya, Vaisheshika and other schools of philosophy describe the evolution of the world-process on the basis of atoms. In their consciousness their view has become a solid reality. This is due to the limitless power of the Self.

Some expound the view that creation exists as a refraction of the inward vision. Others believe it is constituted of material elements alone and is devoid of any spiritual substance.

Some consider the world to have originated from void, and therefore it must return to void. In fact, nothing in this world exists even for two moments. Like the flame of a lamp or like the flowing stream, the world is a succession of transient names and forms.

Some believe that the soul flies like a bird after one's death, while others hold that the soul continues to abide along with the body in the graves until Judgement Day. All these beliefs have become a reality to these believers because of their mental concentration. Their innermost Self has rendered their view real because of Its infinite powers.

Some hold that the world is neither real nor unreal, but indescribable. The Self is like a wish-yielding gem that renders any sustained view as a reality. However, as long as one is overpowered by ignorance, there is a need to hold diverse views regarding this universe and its creator. But

when ignorance is destroyed, all these views are negated in Self-realization.

Therefore, a wise aspirant should take recourse to good association by receiving the guidance of an illumined guru. He is the illumined preceptor who is established in Vedic wisdom as well as in righteous conduct. Such a person must be sought by an aspirant in order to remove the manifold illusions of the world-process.

Without proper guidance, the vast multitudes of people continue to run after the objects of their conviction like a stream rushing on towards the lowlands. An aspirant should not allow this downward movement of consciousness. He should determine the right course of self-effort and should follow it with persistence and tenacity.

O Rama, it is difficult to find illumined sages. However, they do exist among men, gods, demons and subtle spirits that abide in different planes of existence.

Section 98—*The Characteristics of Enlightened Sages*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, for those enlightened beings who are endowed with discriminative knowledge and spiritual vision, the mighty enemies of the soul in the form of anger, greed and infatuation become too little to be of any importance.

The knowers of the Self are neither pleased nor displeased with anyone. They do not accumulate possessions. They do not agitate others, nor do others agitate them.

They are like the cooling moon. The peaceful vibrations emanating from them are able to dispel one's doubts in a moment. Though performing their duties in daily life and resembling others in their outward appearance, they are inwardly established in the cooling silence of the soul.

They delight in studying and expounding the teachings of the scriptures. They have insight into right and wrong, good and evil, real and unreal. They perform actions led by past, fructifying karmas. However, they are ever detached from all activities and their fruits.

They share their wisdom by opening the buds of their heart and spreading the fragrance of their soul. They are like a refreshing garden for delighting the heart of the pilgrim souls as they journey through this mysterious world-process.

They are like the spirits of the spring season. Their advent brings the breeze of peace and the aroma of spiritual virtues. Their voice is sweeter than the cuckoos and nightingales.

The mind of an ignorant person is like a great ocean agitated by mighty waves. Delusions are like sharks and distractions are like storms that continue to whip the ocean. Anger, passion, greed and other negative functions of the mind form the waves that rise and fall in this great ocean. A sage stands like a mighty mountain, withholding the devastating forces of this ocean.

During adversities in life and during the critical conditions of misery, there is no refuge greater than a sage. Good

association is the only ship that takes one across the ocean of the world-process, which abounds with the snakes of desires.

A person who is not inclined to good association is like a worm in a small pit. He lives his life with an extremely constricted state of consciousness. Aspirants must avoid association with such a deluded person because it is easy to lose years of spiritual effort in a short duration of evil association.

One must not turn away from the association with his guru even for a moment. He should serve his guru with humility and dedicated actions. Just as sesame seeds imbibe the fragrance of rose due to their constant association with that flower, in the same way, the mind of an aspirant imbibes the fragrance of spiritual wisdom through the association with his enlightened guru.

Section 99-100—*Animals, Birds and Countless Beings Strive for Happiness*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, we human beings have the ability to exercise our self-effort for the cessation of miseries, but how do animals, birds and other countless beings avoid pain and enjoy happiness?

Sage Vasistha replied: O Rama, all the different *jivas*, whether immovable (in the form of trees and creepers) or movable (in the form of birds and beasts), are capable of enjoying a degree of happiness.

In this creation, each individual strives to avoid pain and experience pleasure. The degree of happiness enjoyed by an animal, bird, worm or tree is indeed very little, yet each soul abiding in that embodiment struggles to experience it.

In the pursuit of pleasure, human beings and animals are alike. The objects that are seen as pleasurable by animals have little meaning to a human being. Yet animals take recourse to intense effort in acquiring their pleasures, and while doing so, are ready to face enormous obstacles.

Even the greatest of beings, Brahma (the creator), who has the whole world for his body, strives for his measure of happiness. In the same way, every creature—even a minute worm—strives for its measure of happiness.

A little fly exists for only a short time, just a fraction of a day, and yet is intent upon acquiring objects of its pleasure every moment of its existence. Though its pleasures are nothing but tiny particles of matter, it remains unsatiated.

A human being is not much different from a fly. He too struggles day and night to acquire objects of pleasure and still remains unfulfilled as time passes by.

Animals and birds assert their ownership of the places they live in and guard their possessions, yet human beings surpass them in their idea of "This is mine. That is not mine."

Trees have very little waking consciousness; they are mostly asleep. Insects, birds and beasts experience waking, dream and sleep just as humans do. Each wishes to stay alive.

None wants to die. Of these countless embodiments, only a human can exercise that special self-effort by which the soul may be led to liberation—freedom from the cycles of birth and death.

O Rama, in reality all this is nothing but *Brahman*. Just as a rock does not permit multiplicity within itself, in the same way, there is no multiplicity in *Brahman*. This world is like a dream. The objects of the world are illusory in nature. Nothing is “mine” or “thine.”

One wave rises and then subsides. In the same way, one body comes to exist, grows and then dies. However, the ocean of the Self remains unaffected.

Reflections in a mirror do not exist as reality. In the same way, this world of multiplicity is reflected in the mirror of *Brahman* and is illusory in nature.

From the point of view of an enlightened sage, this world is like a tree in which its roots are the Self, the branches are the Self, the leaves are the Self, and the flowers and fruits are nothing but the Self. Indeed all this is the Self or *Brahman*.

Section 101—*The Vision of Non-duality Bestows Fearlessness*

Sri Vasistha said: O Rama, the Pure Self alone exists. It is the Pure Self that assumes the different forms and conditions of the world-process. Birth, death, fear, sorrow, pleasure and pain are different manifestations of the same Self.

When you realize the Self that is beyond the seer and the sight, you become free of the cause of pain, sorrow and suffering.

In this Divine vision of the non-duality of the Self, there is no room for the development of *raga* and *dwesha* (attachment and hatred). Devoid of the impressions of attachment and hatred, you cannot experience suffering in the world. When the two poison fangs are removed from a snake, it becomes a source for sport in the hands of snake charmers. In the same way, with the removal of *raga* and *dwesha*, the world becomes delightful for a sage.

There is neither the desirable nor undesirable in this world because all this is essentially one's own innermost Self—the Absolute.

The Absolute Self is devoid of the subjectivity as well as the objectivity of the limited mind. The Self is different from the knower and the known. It is the serene light of the Self that becomes refracted into the knower and the known through the prism of the mind.

No one dies, no one is born. The ocean of Consciousness alone exists. Waves rise and fall without disturbing the fullness of the ocean. In the same way, the waves of illusion continue to surge while the ocean of the Divine Reality is ever immutable and unaffected.

The dark veil of night is gradually lifted as the sun rises. So too, with the rising of wisdom, the world is gradually dissolved into *Brahman*.

There is no reason to grieve at the idea of encountering death. Since the Self cannot be destroyed, the phenomenon of death will bring about renewal in the physical residence of the soul. With this understanding, death should be considered a festive occasion, not a pathetic event. Rejoice, O dull-witted ones: death is going to present new apparels and destroy the tattered garments of the soul.

If you say that death is going to destroy you completely and that there is no rebirth, then you also must rejoice, because all this feverish struggle of life will eventually end. However, do not simply disbelieve rebirth after death; disbelieve even your present existence.

However, this is impossible for you to do. You cannot ever imagine your non-existence. You are essentially the Self. The idea that you are this physical body is an expression of illusion.

If you are afraid of negative conditions you may encounter after death, why not be afraid of those conditions even while you are alive? Do not perform sinful deeds that cause negative conditions, whether in this life or the life to come.

Instead of entertaining the negative thoughts, "I am going to die. Alas! I am dying. I am nearly dead," entertain positive thoughts lit with the light of reason and understanding. Assert, "I am Pure Consciousness. I am the deathless Self. I abide in the Absolute Self. I am infinity and eternity." By changing your angle of vision, you will overcome all forms of grief, as well as the fear of death.

A sage performs virtuous deeds and discards sinful deeds by the mere fact of possessing a highly purified mind. However, he is beyond virtue and vice. He abides in the fearless state of Pure Consciousness.

When confronted with life's adverse developments occasioned by the fructification of past karmas, a sage is not inwardly shaken. He withdraws himself into the all-transcending silence of the Self and allows the violent waves of the world-process to roll on without causing any injury to him. He withdraws himself into the invulnerable cave of *nirvikalpa samadhi* and is unaffected by the raging storms of adversities.

A sage considers birth, death and all worldly developments as worthless and insignificant as straw. Devoid of subtle desires and in the possession of supreme knowledge, he wanders like one ignorant of his great achievements. In all conditions he is ever immutable and fearless because he is not this passing personality. He is the Absolute Self.

Section 102—*Characteristics of a Sage*

Sri Vasistha continued: One who knows the Self becomes the best of persons. Even the stones of the forest become his friends, even trees become his dear relatives and fawns become his children. He neither delights in union with friends and relatives, nor is he affected by grief at their separation. He communes with the universal life of the Self.

Though living in a city crowded with people, he enjoys the solitude of the Himalayan valleys. Even adversity seems as prosperity to him. The mind of a sage is ever immersed in the experience of cosmic fullness.

Even painful conditions are joyous for him. Though speaking eloquently on spiritual matters, a sage is ever immersed in inner silence. Though performing dynamic activities in promoting wisdom and understanding in mankind, he is the non-doer Self in his inward consciousness.

Though experiencing the objects of the world, he is inwardly detached from them. Though devoid of attachment, he is the very fountain-source of pure love towards all his near and dear relatives as well as to all living beings. He sees the Self as the only reality behind different names and forms. Therefore, he loves all without being restricted by egoistic illusions.

A sage is not frightened by anyone, nor does he cause fright in anyone. He does not become elated with any development, nor does he expect any object in the future. He shares the grief as well as the joy of others, though devoid of the illusions of pleasure and pain.

While appearing happy or sorrowful during the alternating conditions of pleasure and pain, a sage is ever established in the bliss of the Self. Therefore, like an immutable mountain, he endures all conditions of joy and sorrow.

Ignorant persons are ever drowning in a river of sorrow. Their joys are empty bubbles of illusion. A sage, however, is ever immersed in the cooling stream of Divine wisdom.

Even when a person practices these qualities hypocritically, he should not feel spurned. Rather, he will eventually discover the essential glory of the Self. Imitating the qualities of a sage has immense spiritual force in removing the negative karmas of the past and in promoting the vision of knowledge.

However, no one can delude a sage by outward expressions of simulated virtues. A sage is capable of understanding the secrets of all. Though possessing the treasure of treasures in the form of Self-realization, a sage does not declare it to the masses. A person who possesses costly diamonds does not approach the village folk to sell it.

There is no object on earth or in the heavens which can tempt a sage. The entire world is like straw before his mighty vision.

A sage may dwell in a city or in a cave. He may fly in the air by psychic powers or he may walk on the earth. He may expound the Vedas or remain absorbed in silence. Though adopting different outward expressions, he is ever immersed in the transcendental Self. He is the very embodiment of *Brahman*.

O Rama, an enlightened sage welcomes adverse conditions such as poverty, condemnation by the masses, and lack of respect and recognition from others. These adversities are prosperity for him because he is able to exercise his inward transcendence in its fullest measure during these conditions of adversity.

The ignorant are desirous of being worshipped. A sage

has nothing to gain by the recognition of the masses. Even *the psychic powers* of flying and enjoying the subtler delights are worthless before the boundless bliss experienced by a sage.

Though internally ever brimming with the fullness of joy, a sage continues to perform his day-to-day duties in this world-process. His actions are in accordance with the holy scriptures.

The felicity enjoyed by listening to the instructions of a sage cannot even be had from the heavenly gardens of gods, where celestial trees bloom with everlasting flowers.

A sage is like the refreshing moon during the summer night or the spring that awakens the hidden beauty of nature to bloom. He allays the feverish suffering of the human heart and fills it with the refreshing fragrance of heavenly wisdom.

Having discovered the illusory nature of the objects of the world, an enlightened Seer renounces all desire for sense-enjoyments. He perceives his own body as a distant rock or tree. He is ever contented in the bliss of the Self.

Having ascended the palace of wisdom, a sage casts his compassionate vision towards those wandering in the darkness of ignorance. He has crossed the turbulent ocean of the world-process and therefore enjoys supreme rest in the Self.

He rejoices to discover that his intellect is no longer attached to the objects of the world. It holds all worldly developments as insignificant as straw.

A sage may dwell in a cave or abide in an *ashram*. He may maintain a household life or wander from place to place. He may live in seclusion or journey to pilgrimage places. He may maintain silence or give eloquent lectures on philosophical topics. He may be a king or a simple *brahmina*. All these external forms do not touch a sage. He is ever established in the Divine Self.

For a sage of enlightenment, all rules and laws of conduct are transcended. He is the very soul of all scriptures. He is the Self—immutable, invulnerable and eternal. Even if a sage were to try hard to bring about the annihilation of himself, he cannot succeed. How can clouds shatter the sky? He becomes the all-pervading Self, which sustains the illusions of the world-process.

Section 103—*Glory of the Scripture of Yoga Vasistha*

Sri Vasistha continues: O Rama, the world-process arises as a result of lack of enquiry and disappears when spiritual enquiry is practiced. An aspirant must direct his intellect towards the spiritual enquiry that effaces this illusion of the world-process. This is the best purpose of the intellect.

An aspirant should develop the qualities of serenity and self-control. He should turn away from evil association and, having taken recourse to the guidance of a preceptor, study *Yoga Vasistha*.

Even though one may attain intellectual knowledge, it is not possible to attain Self-realization until the defects of the

mind are overcome. It is the study of this scripture that enables one to remove those defects.

A person can acquire anything if he continues to maintain a sustained effort towards its realization. Therefore, an aspirant desirous of immortality should maintain a sustained effort until the goal is realized.

He must turn away from the works of the unenlightened and all evil associations. This scripture, *Yoga Vasistha*, is capable of bestowing the greatest victory of Self-realization.

The river of mind flows towards wisdom as well as ignorance. When its movement towards ignorance is checked by the constant study of this scripture and meditation upon its teachings, mind flows speedily towards the ocean of liberation.

There is no scripture as effective as *Yoga Vasistha* in removing ignorance and promoting wisdom. Therefore, an aspirant must sustain his spiritual practice of listening, reflection and meditation by the constant study of this *Yoga Vasistha*.

Even one's beloved parents cannot do as much good to a person as this scripture does. By the study of this scripture and meditation upon its teachings, one attains freedom from the repeated cycles of birth and death.

The objects of the world seem delightful at first sight; however, they are the source of suffering and sorrow. You should not continue to feed on the empty air of sense-enjoyments, which are like gliding serpents.

How regrettable it is that most people do not even know how their life is being spent day by day, and how it comes to a sudden termination. Dull-witted men risk their lives in accomplishing feats of empty valor, but they are unable to develop discrimination, dispassion and other spiritual qualities that could bestow on them the supreme state of liberation.

Men of discrimination build their spiritual homes in the realms of transcendence. How can they allow the degrading spirit of ignorance to kick their heads, as it does to those who are dull-witted? The study of this scripture wards off the influences of ignorance.

Do not turn your steps to the world-process. Let your life-stream flow towards the ocean of liberation. The force of spiritual wisdom can eradicate even the worst of adversities.

Section 104—*Pure Consciousness Is the Reality behind the World-phenomena*

Sage Vasistha continued: The five elements are illusory modifications of the Divine Self. Without the help of the principle of Cosmic Illusion, it is impossible to explain how ether gives rise to air, how air gives rise to the element of fire and similarly how other elements are formed. How can something new arise in an effect that did not exist in the cause?

And if there is nothing in the effect that does not exist in the cause, then, how is it possible to differentiate the effect

from the cause? In the absence of such differentiation, how can ether give rise to air, air give rise to fire, and so on?

In the absence of causation, this world is as illusory as a dream. In fact, the five elements do not exist. The objects of the world have no real existence in themselves. Just as mountains and cities seem so real in one's dream and yet are formed of illusion, in the same way, all these names and forms arise from *avidya* (ignorance).

One should discover the spiritual truth of existence in this manner: I am Pure Consciousness. This world is nothing but Pure Consciousness. Both the world and I are essentially the immutable rock of Divine Consciousness.

Both creation and dissolution of the world are illusory. *Brahman* alone exists as the eternal negation of the world-process. When *Brahman* is realized, all miseries terminate and supreme bliss is experienced. This is liberation. A sage is liberated whether with body or without.

Section 105—*Pure Consciousness Manifests as Dream and Also as the Waking State*

Sage Vasistha continued: Just as the soul experiences the world of dream, which is non-different from itself, the Self sustains the world-process, which is non-different from Itself.

The world of wakefulness is as unreal as the world of dream. Both are modifications of the Self through the veil of ignorance.

The realities of the waking world do not enter the world of dreams. In the same way, the realities of the dream world do not enter the world of wakefulness. The Absolute Reality of the Self is untouched by the dream and wakeful states of consciousness.

The rumbling clouds, rising mountains, cascading waters from mountain crags—all these are unreal and yet appear so real to a dreamer. In the same way, all these vivid realities of the world are, in fact, illusory. Just as an awake person is unable to see the world experienced by his sleeping friend, an enlightened sage does not experience the world of those sleeping in the night of ignorance.

Dreaming is like waking and waking is like dream. Just as waking interrupts a dream, a dream interrupts waking. The idea that the waking state continues to hold a sustained form of reality day to day is wrong. Through the sleep of death, the soul wakes up to another form of reality. The world of wakefulness is, in fact, a long dream and one continues to move from one dream to another.

True awakening is the state of *turiya*, wherein dream, waking, as well as the vast darkness of sleep are completely transcended.

Section 106—*The Ether of Consciousness Alone Exists*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, the waking and dream states are like twin brothers, similar in appearance but with

different names for mere convenience. In fact, there is no difference between the two; both are essentially Pure Consciousness.

Within a moment, Consciousness identified with the mind moves from one object to another distant object. Yet, in between the two movements, the state of object-less Consciousness is the Self. It is in the Ether of Consciousness that the thought waves of the mind drift like clouds.

As all desires are fulfilled in a wise sage, he experiences the bliss of the Self from the ether of his heart. Before falling asleep and at the moment one is about to awake, the pure state of Consciousness reveals itself. However, it is not grasped by the unenlightened mind. The Ether of Consciousness is that which transcends the three states of consciousness—waking, dream and deep sleep.

The pure state of awareness experienced by plants that grow and flourish in the rain is the Ether of Consciousness. When the Self is not refracted by the limited functions of the mind, It reveals Its essential nature as free from all differentiation and duality.

When all internal and external desires of the mind are fulfilled, the ether of the heart is freed from all forms of subtle desires. Then the limitless glory of the Self is revealed.

That by which the objects of the world are desired, pursued, revealed, gained and lost is the Ether of the Self. That in which all objects of the world arise and merge is the Ether of Consciousness.

That in which all concrete and abstract objects of the world are threaded is Pure Consciousness. That which is the efficient and material cause of the universe is Pure Consciousness.

In between two thought-waves, it is the Pure Self that continues to reveal Itself. Just as a screen reveals itself in between two projections in a cinema show, the Self continues to reveal Itself as projecting thoughts rise and fall on the screen of Pure Consciousness.

O Rama, though experiencing objects of the world through your senses, you must abide in the Self by rendering your mind free of all *vasanas* (subtle desires). You will enjoy the bliss of sleep even during the wakeful state of your existence.

Just as the dream world has no real existence in the past, present or future, this world has no real existence in the three periods of time.

The Self alone exists. The triad of seer, seen and sight is illusory. When the subtle desires are dissolved by knowledge, the Self is realized as the underlying reality behind the triad. The illusory seer merges in the true Seer, Who is the Self. There is no Seer, Knower and Perceiver other than the Self.

Section 107—*The World Is Non-existent Like Dream*

Sri Vasistha continued: The world is superimposed on the reality of the Self. The differentiations of seer, seen and sight are illusory modifications of the Self.

All objects and living beings are essentially the supremely silent Absolute. All names and forms are illusory. The world of objects exists like the blueness in the sky.

This world exists like the imaginations of a child. In the light of pure reason, there is no possibility of developing the false notion that "This is mine, this is what I am." How can desires arise for enjoying the non-existent objects of the world?

Nothing can be gained by analyzing the world through dry intellectualism. The intellect must be led to unfold in the form of intuition by meditating upon the Self. Without this spiritual movement, all intellectual efforts are like trying to wash the sky of all clouds with the waters of fancy.

The Self, like the sky, is ever free from the clouds of mental processes. There is no need for vain efforts in causing the Self to shine forth. It shines by Its own light when the mind is purified.

Making the effort to maintain worldly values is as ridiculous as trying to nourish a child that was never born. The realities of the world, sustained by egoistic vision, are mere illusions from the point of view of the intuitive mind.

The mind of the ignorant is constantly involved in the illusions of cause, effect, action, time and the objects of the world. However, as much as the limited mind may conceive these to be true, they are, in fact, illusory when viewed by the illumined mind.

It is the Self that sustains the dream phenomena and is not limited by it. That very same Self is the sustainer of the

dream of the world-process. It is beyond all names and forms projected by the limited mind. It is realized by one's own intuitive vision.

Sections 108 & 109—*The Story of King Vipashchita*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, the very appearance of this world is caused by ignorance. Projected by ignorance, this world appears as endless as *Brahman* Himself. I will relate to you a story that will shed light on this point.

In the shining valley of the Lolaloka Mountains there is a rock. Within that rock exist the three worlds with their time, space and multiplicity of names and forms. In that world-system is the earth with its vast plains, oceans and mountains. Within this earth was a city known as Tatamiti ruled by a powerful king known as Vipashchita.

King Vipashchita was a great devotee of the fire god. He was highly devoted to *brahmins*, saints and sages, and was a great benefactor to his subjects.

He had four great chieftains who, with their vast armies, protected his great kingdom from four sides—north, south, east and west. Peace and affluence reigned supreme for a long time.

However, with the passage of time, it happened one day that a secret agent from the north informed the king that the protector of the eastern boundary had died due to fever. His enemies, taking advantage of this opportunity, had invaded the kingdom; and in a series of battles, the chieftains protect-

ing the country from the east, west and north had been defeated and killed.

Hearing the rush of events, the king summoned his generals with their armies to prepare for a great battle. In the meantime, however, Vipashchita's enemies invaded the royal city and his army and subjects were struck with unimaginable terror.

Advised by his ministers, the king said, "Proceed to the battle and show your valor. I will follow you to the battlefield. First let me offer adorations to my deity—the god of fire."

Despite the terrible situation raging before him, the king composed his mind and, entering the temple of the fire god, offered a fervent prayer to the deity. Finally he performed a self-effacing sacrifice. He offered his own head as a sacrificial oblation to the fire god saying, "May I become fourfold in order to conquer my enemies."

The fire god granted his prayer. Four personalities arose out of the altar—Vipashchita in four forms. Each was endowed with armor, bow, and arrows, and rode on a horse.

**Sections 110-116—*The Four Vipashchitas
Become Victorious; They Enjoy Various Scenes
and Sights of the World***

Sage Vasistha continued: The four Vipashchitas, each with a vast army at his command, fought a raging battle. They attacked their enemies from four sides, devastating

them. Those who had not been killed fled in different directions.

The four Vipashchitas enjoyed their victory by observing the various scenes and sights of the world.

(Mystical Meaning)

This story highlights the Vedantic fact that one Brahman has become many through Maya or Cosmic illusion. The soul in Vipashchita—or the soul in every individual—is a reflection of the Divine Self in the mental process. Every individual soul, being essentially Brahman, may be said to become four-fold, a hundred-fold or all that is, based on its ascending movement towards the realization, “I am Brahman—I am all that is.”

Though essentially Brahman, each soul must follow a special path based on its karmas—each must fight the battle of the world-process. Self-realization is the greatest victory. Having attained this, a sage enjoys Ishwara Srishti—creation filled with the glory of God. This is the theme of the following sections.

The royal attendants entertained their king (Vipashchita in four forms) by describing various scenes and sights of nature in a highly poetic and allegorical fashion.

The attendants said: Behold, O King, the glory of the vast sky, which cradles the sun and sustains numerous stars in its boundless expansion. Though possessing nothing, the sky is the giver of spaciousness to the objects and living beings of this world.

The night spreads a dark veil in the sky and the moon spreads her refreshing moonlight to adore this great deity. The sky is constantly decked by numerous clouds and varied colors of the rainbow.

Though sustaining the agitation caused by clouds and the movement of celestial beings, the sky is ever untouched by them. It is a befitting symbol of the Divine Self. Like the consciousness of a sage, it is unaffected by the world-process.

Numerous worlds arise and dissolve in the vastness of the ether, yet people call the ether an extension of mere voidness. This is indeed the height of folly.

O King, behold the magnanimity of the clouds, how they give forth their bounteous gifts to the thirsty world. They are the embodiment of generosity.

Behold how dogs have imbibed cruelty, fickleness, impurity and a host of vices from the dull-witted men of the world. While a lion ignores the rumbling clouds because of his heroic nature, a dog closes his eyes during a thunder-storm out of fright. Such is the difference between an aspirant who turns away from the world because of his dispassion, and a dull-witted person who runs away from the world due to weakness and cowardice.

On the other hand, dogs laugh at human beings and feel humiliated by being compared to them. They are endowed with qualities of devotion to their master, heroism, contentment and constant alertness—while these qualities are lacking in most human beings.

Crows feed on impure objects. In the same way, evil-minded persons delight in evil thoughts and deeds. Once a crow, having covered its body with the pollen of saffron flowers, pretended to be a swan. When other birds saw it feeding on worms, however, it could not hide its true nature. In the same way, the blackness of one's heart cannot be veiled by superficial acts of hypocrisy.

On the other hand, swans soar in the vastness of the sky. They sport in the placid waters of the lakes that are found in the heights of the Himalayas. They are like yogis who delight in the placid lakes of their spiritual consciousness.

O cuckoos, why do you send forth your sweet notes among the branches of the neem tree where the crows, with their constant fights with the owls, have deafened one's ears?

(Spiritual aspirants are like cuckoos that send forth sweet notes of spiritual messages. But people overcome by ignorance and immersed in their selfish desires are dwellers on the bitter tree of the world-process. Their lives are filled with the noises and crowing of their impure ego, and the hooting of their dark unconscious. Therefore, spiritual aspirants must turn away from the association of evil men.)

A cuckoo brought up in the midst of the crows is soon detested by the crows for its goodness, integrity, poise, beauty, and melodious voice. Those who are steeped in low-minded forms of living cannot welcome a person who expresses the glory of the soul.

O cuckoos, this is not the time of spring; therefore do not sing your melodious notes. Abide in the solitude of the hollows of the trees. (*An aspirant must wait with patience for a proper environment in which he can express his spiritual ideas and thoughts.*)

Section 117—*The Attendants of the Fourfold Vipashchitas Describe the Beauty of Nature*

The attendants said: Behold there, O King, the beauty of the lake abounding with lotuses and lilies which are red, white and blue. The mountain peaks reflect in the lake, enhancing its beauty. Listen to the mingled sound of water-fowls sporting in the lake. Behold the sky with shining stars reflected within it.

There is the lashing sound of the breaking waves mingled with the humming of the bees. Pearly white drops of water are soothing the heat of the people, while beasts are prowling on the banks among the wild thickets.

O King, this lake shines with royal elegance. Lotuses and leaves blowing in the wind are fanning it. The white foam is beautifying the face of the lake. Cuckoos and bees sing as if adoring the great king (the lake); and numerous creepers appear as the consorts of the king, attending on him.

It is like *satsanga* (good association) wherein the spiritual seekers are lotuses and lilies, and Divine qualities are like the birds and bees. And in the purified lake of the mind, the eternity of the Self reflects like the mountains and the sky.

O King, though there are so many waves and ripples, yet the lake is one and the only reality. In the same way, in spite of the differences of names and forms, this entire creation is nothing but *Brahman* (the Absolute Self).

Overpowered by ignorance, the individual souls continue to drift on the waves of the world-process, always moving from one whirlpool of karma to another.

O black bee, you wander from flower to flower drinking nectar, and yet you are not contented. (*Even so, a person wanders from object to object for happiness, and continues to be miserable. However, misery ends when the Truth of the Self is realized*).

Sections 118-120—*The Description of Peacocks, Cranes and Others*

The attendants continued:

O King, behold the cranes. They emit strange sounds foretelling the arrival of rains.

O cranes, seated by the lake you appear as swans. But in fact you are low-minded. You keep company with crows, utter harsh words, and are cruel to other creatures. You choke the neck of your prey, thus teaching the thieves and robbers how to achieve their selfish ends.

You should become a swan by taking recourse to good association and by giving up your evil ways. Look at the

peacocks—how generous they are! They appeal to Indra, the god of rains, and Indra sends down abundant showers.

Look at the palm trees—how erect they stand! They give scanty fruits, which are inaccessible. They do not afford shade for weary strangers. One should not grow like palm trees, with high ego, and scanty goodness.

O King, behold these mighty trees under whose cooling shade *siddhas* and *vidyadharas* rejoice, singing and playing their heavenly music. They give delight to everyone, whether they may be rich or poor, good or evil. They are the symbols of enlightened sages.

Sections 121-123—*The Four Vipashchitas Follow Four Different Courses*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, the Vipashchitas reached the coast of the ocean. They arranged for the management of their four kingdoms and decided to explore the vastness of Divine creation. They were endowed with amazing powers by the grace of the fire god. They had conquered the elements, and they could travel according to their will.

The Vipashchita that traveled to the west encountered a mighty fish that swallowed him and carried him through the salty ocean up to the proximity of the Milky Ocean. There the fish brought him out of its belly and left him. The Vipashchita proceeded onwards. In the course of his travels, Garuda (the mystic eagle) carried him to the banks of the

Milky Ocean. At another time, a *kinnari* (a celestial being) attended on him for a day in an enchanting forest in the Mandarachala Mountains.

The Vipashchita who traveled to the south reached an ocean of sugary sweetness. There he came under the influence of a female spirit (*yakshini*) who was a great enchantress. Later, he incurred the wrath of Daksha, who by his curse reduced the king to ashes. After the lapse of a hundred years, he was freed of the effect of the curse, and then he abode in Shaka-dweepa.

The Vipashchita who traveled to the north continued onwards. He worshipped Lord Shiva and Goddess Uma, and received the boon of invincibility from the deities. Encountering countless challenges, he moved over islands, continents, and chains of mountains. Then he crossed rivers and seas and came to a strange Land of Gold. There he incurred the wrath of a *siddha* whose curse turned him into a rock. Thus he abode for a hundred years. Finally by the grace of his deity—the fire god—he was freed of that curse and he lived a joyous life.

The Vipashchita who traveled to the east reached the Ganges River, where he encountered a mighty crocodile that wanted to devour him. However, he overpowered and killed the crocodile, and was carried on by the Ganges River to the city of Kanyakubja. There in that city the king was swallowed up by a demon. However, the king destroyed the demon, and emerging out of the demon's body continued his journey. He reached the shores of the Milky Ocean, and while enjoying the Nandana Groves he became passionately

attached to an *apsara* (a celestial nymph) and spent seventy years there.

Section 124—*The Miraculous Power of Avidya or Ignorance*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, how was it possible for one Vipashchita to turn into four personalities, each having a distinct nature?

Sage Vasistha replied: O Rama, it is the inherent capacity of the Self to sustain the projections of ignorance. During dream, one person becomes many individuals abiding in a world of countless objects. So too, one Self becomes many due to *avidya* or ignorance.

Countless objects reflecting in a mirror do not taint the mirror. In the same way, countless souls driven by their desires and karmic entanglements through the illusion of time and space do not mar the placidity of Consciousness.

The experiences of pleasure and pain are nothing but reflections in Consciousness. Objects reflect in the senses, and sense perceptions reflect in the intellect (*buddhi*). The functions of the intellect reflect in Pure Consciousness. Thus, the experiences of the world are mere reflections, while Pure Consciousness, though giving validity to these experiences, is ever untouched by them.

If multiplicity is negated by the enlightened mind, then there is nothing but non-duality. If the mind is partly enlightened, there is duality sustained by non-duality.

Due to a special type of *prarabdha* (fructifying karma), King Vipashchita turned into four personalities—each working out a portion of *prarabdha*. Yogis are known to have the power of turning into many personalities in order to exhaust the burden of past karmas.

King Vipashchita, however, was not an enlightened yogi. Therefore, his four personalities, while exhausting portions of *prarabdha*, began to gather new karmas. As a result of this, each of the four Vipashchitas followed his own course of adventures and experiences in the vast realm of ignorance.

One *jiva* (individual soul) may turn into many *jivas*, and many *jivas* may turn into one *jiva*. This should not be surprising to an aspirant. The *jivas* are not constant units, they are like reflections of the Self in diverse mental processes. The sun may reflect in four reservoirs of water causing four reflections; and when these four are united into one lake, the four reflections turn into one reflection. In the same way, one *jiva* may turn into many *jivas* and many may turn into one.

The scriptures uphold the concept of one soul appearing as many individuals and many individuals turning into one *jiva*.

In fact, the *jivas* are countless reflections of the one Self. It is one that has turned into many in the realm of ignorance. When knowledge dawns, any *jiva* may become liberated from the illusion of time and space. The liberation of one *jiva* does not put an end to the world-process of the other *jivas*.

Clouds, due to their greatness, are able to offer rain to mountains, villages and cities. In the same way, great yogis are able to perform various actions for the well-being of the world by adopting numerous manifestations.

Lord Vishnu, though ever resting on the couch of the Shesha serpent, is also engaged in various actions through His numerous incarnations.

These four Vipashchitas, though primarily having one soul, began to wander through the realm of ignorance in different ways—performing different actions, experiencing different conditions of pleasure and pain. (Thus, there evolved four souls with their different karmas moving in different directions).

Section 125—*The Spiritual Majesty of a Liberated Sage*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, the Vipashchita who went to the east passed through numerous experiences, and falling under the sway of an enchantment turned into a rock.

The Vipashchita of the west came to know of this and assisted in the release of the eastern Vipashchita. In turn, the western Vipashchita encountered a similar predicament and was helped by the southern Vipashchita.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, how is it possible for a yogi to perform actions at all places and at all times?

Sage Vasistha replied: O Rama, the world exists as a solid reality for those who are overpowered by ignorance.

From the point of view of an enlightened yogi, it is an appearance sustained by the Self.

For the yogi who has become one with the Self underlying the creation, there is no place or time where he is not. He becomes the all sustaining *Brahman*. Nothing is impossible for one who views himself as *Brahman*, and thus becomes the controller of *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion).

It is further important to note that as an aspirant moves towards realization of the Self, he begins to control *Maya* more and more. He realizes his innate mastery over the world of ignorance in a progressive manner, thus experiencing increasing power of will and control over the world.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, why did the Vipashchitas, who were endowed with great psychic powers, fall into degrading embodiments such as ox, lion, frog and others?

Sage Vasistha replied: O Rama, King Vipashchita was not an enlightened yogi. He attained psychic powers by the force of mental concentration. If he were enlightened he would have worked out his *prarabdha karma* through four personalities and become established in *Brahman*.

Sections 126-128—*The World-process of the Four Vipashchitas after Their Death*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, what happened to the Vipashchitas as they traveled in diverse ways, experiencing the vastness of the world?

Sage Vasistha said: O Rama, one of the four Vipashchitas reached the limits of Krauncha Dweepa, where he was crushed and killed by an elephant.

Another Vipashchita, whose body was terribly injured, was taken by a demon through the sky and thrown into the fires raging in the waters of the ocean.

A *vidyadhara* took the third Vipashchita to the celestial assembly of Indra. Having entered the assembly of gods, he did not bow down before Indra. Consequently, Indra became enraged and burned him to ashes by pronouncing a curse.

The fourth Vipashchita was cautiously passing by the banks of a river in a mountainous valley at the border of Kusha Dweepa when he was attacked and killed by an alligator.

After death, the soul of each Vipashchita wandered through cycles of birth and death. The soul of the Vipashchita who proceeded to the west finally had the *darshan* of Lord Krishna (mystic experience of beholding Krishna). As a result, he received spiritual knowledge and entered into *samadhi* for five years, and finally attained liberation.

The soul of one of the remaining three Vipashchitas entered into Chandra Loka (the astral plane), where he enjoys heavenly bliss. One of the remaining two Vipashchitas finally became a god in the heavenly world. The fourth Vipashchita is still wandering through the cycles of birth and death.

**Section 129—*Vipashchita in Deer Embodiment
Brought before Rama***

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, it was one Vipashchita who became four. In the beginning, the original Vipashchita had only one set of *vasanas* (subtle desires). Why did the four Vipashchitas develop different *vasanas* that led them to different experiences?

Sage Vasistha replied: O Rama, *vasanas* are formed and intensified by repeated actions and their resulting experiences. Time, space, and circumstances aid the formation of different *vasanas*.

(Though essentially all souls are Brahman—the Absolute Self—in the realm of Maya every soul has developed a distinct form of vasana, and therefore continues to experience different embodiments. Only in the state of liberation is the individuality of the soul lost, like a river losing its identity in the ocean.)

O Rama, even at present, one of the Vipashchitas has been born as a deer. His *vasanas* for experiencing the world have not ceased.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, where does this deer abide? How long will this Vipashchita stay as a deer? When will he attain enlightenment?

Sage Vasistha replied: O Rama, you may be surprised to know that the deer that has been presented to you by the King

of Trigrarta, and which has been placed in your zoo, is a Vipashchita reborn in that form.

Sri Rama then instructed some boys to bring the deer into the royal palace. When the deer was brought, everyone began to gaze at the beauty of the deer. The deer in turn began to express its antics, delighting the audience—sometimes raising the head upwards, sometimes downwards, sometimes prancing and running in circles.

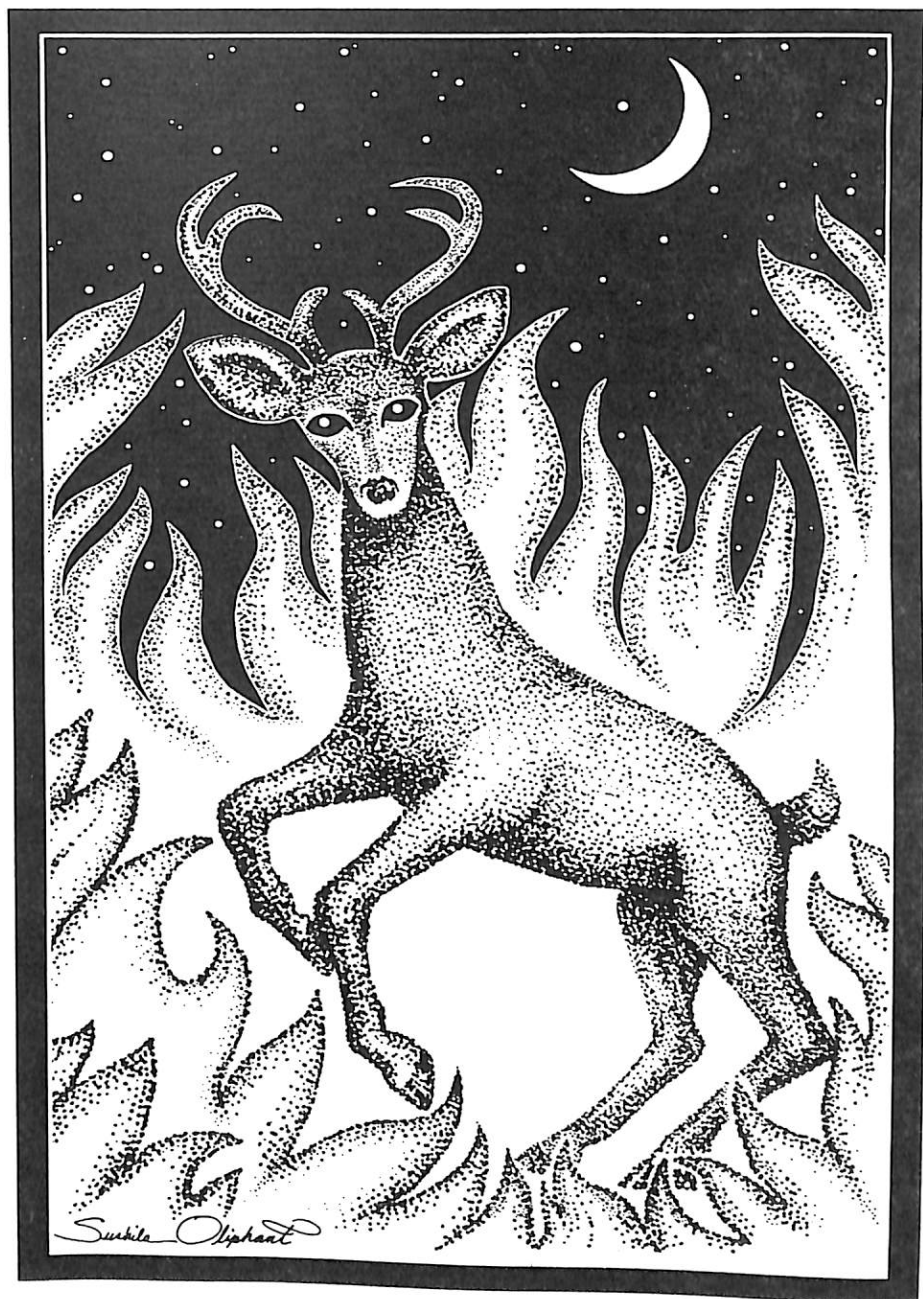
Everyone began to wonder at the power of *Maya*. Once that Vipashchita was a powerful king, ruling a great kingdom, commanding a great army, enjoying boundless wealth and pleasures. And now the very same Vipashchita is reduced to a little deer. Amazing is the power of *Maya*!

Section-130—*The Deer Turns into Vipashchita by the Grace of Vasistha*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, when will this Vipashchita be freed of this deer embodiment?

Sage Vasistha replied: O Rama, behold, I will perform a miracle before you. By sprinkling water from my mantra-charged vessel, I will produce fire. Since fire is the deity of the Vipashchita, the deer will enter into the fire and will emerge out of it as King Vipashchita.

Accordingly, Sage Vasistha pronounced some mantras, and sprinkled water from his vessel. Fire blazed forth in the



space before the deer. That fire was without smoke, and burned without fuel. The deer was delighted to see that fire. It moved backwards like a lion before a prey and then bounced into the blazing fire.

Soon, before the eyes of all, the deer body was consumed to ashes, but out of the ashes there emerged a human being. King Vipashchita (now known as Bhasa) emerged out of the fire, fully dressed in a regal manner.

Then Bhasa sat down in meditation. For a short while everyone in the audience in Dasharatha's court, along with Vasistha and Rama, sat in silence. Having recovered the memories of his past embodiments, Bhasa got up and turned his gaze to the people of the assembly. Finally, he approached Sage Vasistha and offered his adorations to him.

Sage Vasistha, placing his hand on Bhasa's head said, "O King, you have wandered in the realm of darkness over a long period of time. Now this is the end of that painful sojourn. May ignorance be fully destroyed!

King Dasharatha said: O King, you have wandered in this world-process for a long, long time. May you relax and be seated!

Bhasa offered adorations to all those present in the assembly and then occupied the royal seat given to him by King Dasharatha.

**Sections 131-135—*Urged by Sage Vishwamitra, Bhasa
Relates His Experiences***

King Dasharatha wondered how King Vipashchita allowed himself to wander through the world-process due to ignorance.

Sage Vishwamitra, supporting the view of the king, said: O King, one who has not attained enlightenment continues to wander through countless embodiments in a mysterious universe where there is neither a beginning nor an end.

Once upon a time, long, long ago, there flourished a warrior race known as Vatadhana. Three princes (who are still living today) were born in this royal family.

Like King Vipashchita, they too developed an intense longing to explore this vast universe and come to the ultimate limits of this visible world.

Pursuing their intense longing, they passed through many cycles of birth and death. Like little ants moving on a mighty ball, they continued to explore the universe. And they are still doing so, without having found its limits.

This world is a projection of the Cosmic Mind. The individual soul is essentially the Absolute Self. In the realm of ignorance, the soul, which is an illusory reflection of the Absolute Self, wanders as if to discover the ultimate reach of

this universe. But there is neither beginning nor end of this illusory universe.

Like the wanderings in a dream, this king has wandered through countless embodiments. Now, may we hear from King Bhasa, who was previously known as Vipashchita, as much as he can remember about his strange experiences through his many past lives.

King Bhasa replied: O King, by the favor of Agni Devata (the god of fire) I remember the experiences of pleasure and pain, and the strangest of happenings from many of my past lives.

I have been a tree in a great forest, and with my limited senses I endured heat and cold, wind and breeze, and countless vicissitudes of nature for a thousand years. I was embodied as a *vidyadhara* passionately attached to *vidyadharis* (a class of female celestial beings).

I was a swan sporting in the Mandakini River for fifteen hundred years—listening to the songs of *devis* (goddesses) from the Kshira Sagara (Milky Ocean).

Tumbling from embodiment to embodiment, I became an *apsara* (a heavenly nymph) in the Sahyachala Mountains. In course of time I incarnated as an ascetic in the Mahendra Mountains.

Among the most mysterious experiences, I remember once I saw a strange woman whose body was transparent. In

her body there reflected the three worlds. When I asked her who she was, she explained that she was the *Chit* (Consciousness) aspect of *Brahman*, the indwelling essence of every being in the three worlds.

She explained that all beings have Consciousness as their essential reality, and therefore, every individual may be said to have the three worlds reflected in their deepest essence.

These countless beings are being led by the voice of their conscience, guiding them about what is right or wrong. That voice proceeds from the Self within them.

In the course of my wanderings, I saw a world where there were no women. People were produced from the elements and they dissolved in the elements.

I saw a world that abode in darkness—a world where all beings arise out of *akasha* (ether) and dissolve in *akasha*, a world without the sun, moon and stars, and yet luminous. All living beings there are self-luminous.

In brief, there is no place where I have not been; there is no secret spot that I have not seen. There is no act or event that I have not known.

(In the course of his narratives, King Bhasa recalled how he had once seen a mighty corpse fall upon the earth. Protected by the fire god, he was able to stay unaffected, witnessing the destruction of the world.)

Section 136—*The Story of the Gigantic Corpse*

Bhasa asked the fire god about the story of the gigantic corpse. The fire god related the story as follows:

The fire god said: There is the Ether of Consciousness, which is formless and all-pervasive. The countless world-systems float in that Ether like dust-particles. Just as there arises a dream-person out of one's own consciousness, in the same way, out of *Brahman* (the Ether of Consciousness) there arose a particle of light.

This particle of light projected the senses, the body, and the world composed of elements. In this world, there existed a *jiva* (soul) known as Asura, and justifying his name, he was demoniac in nature.

He incurred the wrath of a sage whose *ashram* he had destroyed due to his demoniac nature. The sage cursed him to become a mosquito.

The fire of the curse consumed his body. He entered into an unconscious state and drew to himself the subtle elements in certain proportions. Then he began to experience himself as a mosquito, having a life-span of only two days.

As a mosquito, he enjoyed sporting with a she-mosquito while swinging on the blades of a tender grass.

(At this stage of the story, Sri Rama wanted to know about the difference between the birth of great sages such as

Sanaka and others (who arose out of Brahma's mind) and that of other *jivas* (who are in the realm of ignorance). Sri Vasistha explained that the former arise as an illusory modification of *Brahman*, while the latter arise out of delusion.)

The fire god continued the story of the mosquito: Then while the mosquito was enjoying its life, suddenly a deer came by and the giant foot of the deer crushed the mosquito to death. Then the soul of the mosquito entered into the embodiment of a deer. In course of time the deer was killed by a hunter, and because of the last impression in the mind of the deer, the soul incarnated as a hunter.

The hunter, in the course of his wanderings, happened to meet a *muni* (a holy man) in a forest. He enjoyed *satsanga* (holy association) with the *muni*, who asked him to give up killing animals and to renounce his bow and arrow.

The *muni* said: O *vyadha* (hunter), why are you wandering in delusion? Why do you perpetuate a miserable existence by killing the deer? Why don't you take recourse to great virtues such as non-violence, grant fearlessness to all creatures, and perform righteous deeds that will lead you to immortality?

Life on this earth is transient. It is like a drop descending from a cloud. The enjoyments of the world are fleeting like lightning flashes. The pleasures of youth are transient like the waves in a river. This body is perishable. Therefore, O my son, try to attain Self-realization with the help of guru and the scriptures.

Section 137—*Insight into the Dream World*

The *vyadha* (the hunter) asked: O Sage, if killing animals produces pain, then tell me what type of conduct will lead me to the cessation of pain?

The *muni* asked the hunter to abide with him to practice the conduct of holy men and devote his life to the cultivation of virtues and the practice of reflection.

After some time, the heart of the *vyadha* became purified and he became reflective. He approached the *muni* and asked: O Lord, tell me, how does the dream that arises within a person seem to be like the outer world? How does the outer world enter in the heart of a living being and appear as a dream? Why is this world experienced externally in the waking state and internally in the dream state?

The *muni* replied: I too had similar doubts during the early days of my yogic practices. At that time I had not yet developed the maturity of discriminative intellect. In order to find answers to questions regarding the dream and waking states, I sat in a lotus pose and practiced *samadhi*.

Then I adopted the technique of entering another person's body (*para kaya pravesh*). I became one with *prana* (the vital energy), and with the act of exhalation left my own body and entered the body of my disciple, who was sleeping soundly.

The *jiva* (of the disciple) drew me along with his incoming breath. I found myself in the midst of the network

of *nadis* (vital channels) and their varied functions—as if drowning in the hot currents of an ocean, as if fallen into a hellish region filled with blood, phlegm and the digestive fluids.

Then I found my way into the heart of the *jiva*, and there I entered the mystic flame and was able to witness the experiences of the *jiva*.

In the dream of the *jiva*, there were mountains, the shining sun, oceans, gods, demons, human beings, cities, directions, continents, the time in its three aspects, the seasons, and all that is seen in this world.

I reflected upon the miraculous power of Divine Consciousness, which creates the illusion of dream. I realized that both, the dream and waking, are nothing but extensions of one's own consciousness. Even the waking experience in dream is nothing but dream. Therefore, wakefulness and dream are both illusory in nature.

Even the experience of one's death is a form of dream. The Self is immortal; it experiences birth and death as if in a dream. Therefore, even though thousands of bodies may be destroyed through repeated embodiments, the Self remains unaffected.

A *jiva* experiences dream when consciousness is less externalized. When more externalized he experiences the waking state. In fact, both these states are products of ignorance.

Then I wanted to examine the nature of deep sleep. When the soul becomes tired of seeing the world in dream and waking, it reflects thus, "What have I to do with the world-process in the form of the dream and waking worlds? Let me withdraw the functions of the mind." Then there arises the state of deep sleep.

During the state of sleep, one is not aware of the multiplicity of objects, and yet one is not devoid of awareness. A yogi may experience the state of deep sleep even in waking state by withdrawing his mind from the thoughts of the world (in this case, a yogi enters into *samadhi*).

When the intensity of sleep weakens, one enters into dream or waking state. An aspirant, however, must go beyond the three states—waking, dream and deep sleep—in order to enter *turiya*—the transcendental state of the Self.

It is *turiya* that sustains and interpenetrates the three states. When the illusion of the three states is overcome, it is *turiya* that shines forth as the only reality.

Sections 138-139—*The Blending of the Muni's Soul with the Soul of the Individual*

The *muni* continued: Having thus reflected upon the mystery of the four states (waking, dream, sleep and *turiya*), I proceeded to become one with the *jiva* of the individual. The moment I withdrew myself from the luminous substance, my senses became externalized. I restrained the

senses with great effort, and then began to spread in the soul even as a drop of oil spreads on water.

Then my subtle *vasanas* began to blend with the *vasanas* of the individual. As a result of this I saw two worlds side by side. All the directions were doubled—two suns began to shine, there were two skies, two earths. But when the blending of the *vasanas* was completed, both worlds appeared as one.

I became unified with the *chitta* of the individual. Having surrendered my own freedom I began to experience the sleep that was being enjoyed by the individual.

In a while, when the food was digested, the individual entered into a dream. His *pranas* began to flow through the subtle channels in a mysterious manner. I saw a world arise from his heart.

I saw the state of deluge when the ocean swallowed the earth, and even the mountains were tossed by its gigantic waves. The three worlds were swept in the deluge waters.

I was then seated in my home with my wife, children and servants. I witnessed the terrible destruction and saw how I, my relatives, my home and all my possessions were swept away by the waves.

I was tossed by the giant waves, and my body was tortured and crushed by wooden logs, the debris of the buildings, the rocks and the burning trees. Soon I found a

refuge on a mountain peak, but the cruel ocean with its boisterous waves carried me away.

Led by the impressions of the past personality (as *muni*, who was in the state of meditation), I recollected that I was really the *muni*, and not the personality that was being tossed by the waves. Immediately I breathed a sigh of relief. I realized that all the tragedy that I was observing was of the form of illusion.

However, I continued to witness the terrible occurrences in a detached manner. I saw even the gods of heaven devoured by the waters of deluge. Even the glorious heavenly world and all its gardens and palaces were utterly destroyed.

Sections 140-141—*The Muni Describes His Amazing Experiences*

The *vyadha* asked: O Sage, how was it possible for you who are enlightened to have entered into the state of delusion. Why did you not overcome those painful experiences by entering into *samadhi*?

The *muni* replied: O hunter, it is possible for a yogi to prepare his mind for facing a catastrophe that occurs in a gradual succession. But if it occurs all of a sudden, it is impossible to confront it peacefully. During such conditions, even gods are unable to maintain a poised mind.

Further, I was pursuing the dream of another individual. It is this pursuit that led me to these experiences. Even impossible things happen in dream.

The hunter asked: O Sage, if the dream world you perceived was false, then why do you describe it? What purpose can be served by recounting the events of dream?

The *muni* replied: O hunter, you will learn a profound lesson from this description. You will learn to recognize this waking world to be as illusory as the world of dream. Therefore, listen to what happened next.

Soon the deluge waters subsided. The world was seen in ruins. The bodies of celestial beings as well as of others were strewn here and there.

Then I found myself exhausted on a mountain summit. I discovered an *ashram* of a sage, where I entered into a deep sleep. Soon I had a dream in which I saw the same deluge. Thus, distressed by double trouble, I woke up and saw the mountain in the heart of the individual. The next day the sun rose, the world emerged like the leaves from a branch. Heaven, earth, air, fire, water, sky, mountains, rivers, the directions—all these emerged out of my very mind.

Soon I was inclined to action as an individual in that world. I found myself as a young boy of sixteen in a village. I felt, "This is my father, this is my mother, this is my home, this is my brother, these are my friends." I was the son of a *brahmin*. I began to pass my days performing my various duties.

I soon lost the memory of my prior existence. I became intensely identified with the body of the dream. I believed the body to be the Self. My wife became the center of my happiness.

I was proud of my possessions. I had an old cow. I had planted a bean creeper in my courtyard. I was very busy performing the various duties of my daily life. I used to sit by the green fields, delight in bathing in rivers and lakes, and visit pilgrimage places. A hundred years passed.

An enlightened sage happened to come to my home (the good impressions of the unconscious give rise to enlightening circumstances). I welcomed him with great devotion. When he had eaten and was relaxing he began to tell spiritual stories. He explained how *Brahman* alone exists as the Absolute Reality sustaining the illusion of the world-process.

By his teachings I recovered my memory. I realized that I was experiencing that world within the body of the individual into whom I had entered. The body of that individual had become like the body of *Virat*—the Cosmic Being. I wanted to leave the individual and enter my own body, but I could not find the mouth of the individual in order to exit from his body.

I identified myself with the *pranas* of the individual and was able to emerge from his body through his outgoing breath. Then to my surprise, I saw that I was seated in meditation. Only a *muhurta* (forty-eight minutes) had passed.

The individual into whose body I had entered was still sleeping, and some of my disciples were seated near me to attend on me.

Led by curiosity, I entered into the body of the individual again. By this time, *pralaya* (cosmic dissolution) was occurring in that world.

Section 142—*The Description of Clouds that Rain Fire*

The *vyadha* asked: O Sage, you had entered the body of the individual for the purpose of gaining insight into dream. What mystery did you unravel?

How was it possible for you to see the great ocean surging within the heart of the individual? How were you able to witness the earth, the mountains, the rivers, the directions, and the various worlds within the body of the individual?

The muni replied: O *vyadha*, this world is illusory in nature. How could it have arisen from *Brahman*, Who is the immutable Self? This creation does not exist in reality. This is what I learned from my entry into the body of the individual.

Deluded by words and their meanings, the ignorant consider this world real. But he who has attained enlightenment is no longer deluded by words and meanings, names and forms. Therefore, the world, whether experienced in dream or in waking, is nothing but *Brahman* the Absolute.

From the intuitive standpoint, there is no body, no heart, no dream. There is neither knowledge nor ignorance, neither birth nor death. *Brahman* alone exists.

A knower of the Self sees the world in the same manner as *Ishwara* or God sees it. From the point of view of God (the Cosmic Self) this world is nothing but a dream, and a sage who has become one with God sees the world in the same manner.

From our point of view nothing is real or apparent; there is absence of the triad (seer, seen and sight). *Brahman* alone exists as the ether of Consciousness.

What appears as a solid wall to one being may appear as vacant space to another. Though the Self is the innermost reality in everyone, that Self is experienced in the form of different worlds through the limited minds of different beings.

It is the Self that, through ignorance, becomes the dreamer caught in a dream world, or the waking subject caught in the long dream of the world-process.

Fragrance cannot be seen by the eyes, yet it exists and is perceived through the nostrils. In the same manner, while this world seems to disappear for some in sleep as well as in a cosmic deluge, yet, for others it continues to exist. In fact those who are enlightened see *Brahman*, while others continue to see the world of names and forms.

The *vyadha* asked: O Sage, to whom does karma belong, and who is liberated from it? How do those who do not have prior karma maintain the mental process?

The *muni* replied: Brahma, Sanaka, Kapila and other Self-born beings manifest at the beginning of creation. They have no karmas. Their bodies are of the nature of Pure Consciousness. From their point of view there is no world, no multiplicity, and no mental imaginations.

At the beginning of creation, numerous beings also manifest, but those who are ignorant consider themselves different from *Brahman*. They take this world to be real. It is because of this error that they experienced death in their past embodiments, in the previous *kalpa*. That is why they seem to be born with a prior karma.

It is due to ignorance that they have accepted the body as the Self, and have become deeply involved in the world-process.

Those, however, who have static bodies have not intensified their belief in the reality of the world. Therefore, they are free from the fetters of karmas.

In fact, this creation is merely an appearance. Therefore, how can there be karma and its fructifications? It is ignorance pertaining to the Self—the innermost essence of one's own being—which is the cause of karmic entanglements.

Karma is nothing but ignorance. Therefore, to the extent one becomes enlightened (and freed from ignorance), to that

extent karma is increasingly destroyed. As knowledge unfolds, the bondage of karma decreases.

Since karma does not exist in reality, there is no difficulty in destroying it. Karma is superimposed on the Self through ignorance, and when ignorance is destroyed, karma does not exist.

As long as the knowledge of the Self does not arise, *Maya* continues to create this fearful world-process. But when that knowledge arises, this world ceases to exist.

That knowledge terminates the repeated process of birth and death. One should strive wholeheartedly for the attainment of that knowledge—which is the only method of removing the fear of the world-process.

Sections 143-144—*The Glory of Knowledge*

The *muni* continued: O hunter, the sun adorns the sky to delight the assemblage of lotuses. In the same manner, a sage adorns the assembly of the learned, helping their intellect to bloom by his luminous knowledge.

Before the majesty of the realization of the Self, even the attainment of Indrahood is as insignificant as straw drifting among the billows of the ocean.

Even the sum total of the glories of the three worlds—the earth, the nether worlds and the heavens—cannot compare with the glory of Self-realization.

Just as the full moon shines in the cloudless autumn sky, in the same way, the Bliss of the Self shines in the purified heart of the sage who has attained spiritual knowledge.

The illusion of snake-in-a-rope is removed instantly when a person sees the rope in the proper light. In the same way, the illusion of the world-process is dispelled instantly when *Brahman* is realized.

Since this world does not exist in reality, there is no need to look for its cause. The beings and objects that are seen in dream exist without any cause. Similarly, the beings and objects of this world have no cause. They are, in fact, non-existent in nature.

Even though the dream world is non-existent from the waking standpoint, yet it sustains its relative realities. Even dream experiences follow certain causation. For example, one must procure food, eat, and digest in order to satisfy one's hunger. Even though all this process is illusory, yet it seems real in dream. In the same manner, the experiences of this waking world, in spite of their being explicable through causation, are illusory in nature.

It is Pure Consciousness that appears in the form of the waking and the dream worlds. Light and its effulgence, fire and its heat, water and its liquidity, and the breeze and its coolness are non-different from each other. In the same manner, Pure Consciousness or *Brahman* and the world (in the waking and dream states) are non-different from each other.

Appearing as the world, *Brahman* is apparently subject to creation and dissolution. However, in reality, It is unborn, taintless, peaceful, and of the nature of Pure Consciousness alone.

When a city in dream is known to be illusory, it merges in your heart. In the same way, when this world is known to be illusory, it merges in *Brahman*.

Just as a certain form of causation continues in your dream, in the same manner, a form of causation continues from the beginning of the creative cycle to its termination in *pralaya* (dissolution).

Just as vibrations exist in air, in the same manner, the three worlds exist as vibrations in Consciousness. Just as vastness abounds in the vast sky, in the same manner, Consciousness abounds in *Brahman*, Who is Pure Consciousness.

When one discovers his innermost identity with *Brahman*, causation disappears. Just as the snake disappears from the illusion of snake-in-rope in the presence of light, in the same manner, this world ceases to exist before the light of the intuitive knowledge of *Brahman*.

One who has not attained this knowledge dies to be born. As if moving from one dream to another, he experiences a different body in a different world.

Vyadha asked: O Sage, when this body dies how is another body born? What is the cause of rebirth? If embodi-

ment is caused by righteous and unrighteous karmas, it will be impossible to attain freedom from embodiment. Since the fruits of karma are perishable, how can it lead one to liberation?

The *muni* replied: *jiva* or individual soul is nothing but Pure Consciousness reflecting in the mind. The mind in turn is nothing but a bundle of impressions. Identified with the impressions of the mind, *jiva* imagines its birth, death and all its experiences in the world-process.

Therefore, karma, *vasana* (subtle desires), the individual soul, the Self—these are one and the same in their essence.

At the time of death, the soul evolves a “dream” within itself and sees itself dying and then journeying to the other world led by its karmas. In fact the Self is ever unaffected by its “dreams.” The experiences of birth and death are merely imagined by the Self. In the realm of ignorance, the Self continues to imagine repeated births and deaths.

During sleep the Self withdraws the waking and dream states, but since the veil of ignorance is not destroyed this withdrawal is temporary. During *pralaya* or universal dissolution, the Self withdraws the world-process, but since the veil of *Maya* is not removed, the world is projected again and again. During *samadhi*, however, the withdrawal is associated with increasing enlightenment. In *moksha* or liberation, the withdrawal of the world is absolute. Then there is no more birth and death.

In the state of bondage, the Self has given rise to millions and millions of worlds. If one were to unravel the mystic secrets of these worlds, he would discover *Brahman* as the reality underlying them.

Due to restricted vision, every *jiva* sees its world as the only reality. However, in fact, the reality is *Brahman* alone, Which sustains the mirage of millions of worlds.

That which is real from the point of view of the knower of the Self is unreal from the point of view of the ignorant. That which is unreal for the knower is real for the ignorant.

It is Consciousness within the individual that has determined the reality of the world (through ignorance), and it is up to Consciousness to determine its unreality and thus assert its freedom from the world-process.

The knowable objects are the same as Consciousness or Knowledge. When this is discovered, the world of duality is negated, and the non-duality of the Self is realized.

See how Consciousness gives rise to millions of names and forms in dream, and then withdraws them in the deep sleep state. This world is nothing but a dream.

O *vyadha*, if you were to travel to the east or the west or to any direction for a long, long time, you would continue to experience perishable objects in different forms—but you would never encounter the destruction of the Self.

Whatever a person desires with a firm resolve he attains, provided he does not waver until the object of his resolve is realized. If he does not attain the object of his desire, it is because of the weakness of his will. The Self in him is the creator of endless worlds. Therefore, there is nothing impossible of attainment.

When one's resolve is weak, the objects seem unstable—as if they are the contents of one's dream; but when the resolve becomes firm, the objects appear stable—they become the contents of one's waking state.

When one entertains two contrary resolves, the stronger resolve overpowers the weaker resolve, or both become voided. If you desire to become a bird in the sky and a deer on the earth, both at the same time, you may succeed in becoming one of the two, or neither of the two.

When you are enlightened you see nothing but the Self. Therefore, the Self should be the supreme object of your resolve. It is the Self that appears in the form of the multiplicity of objects through ignorance.

This world-process is essentially the Self. Therefore, do not direct your mind towards the objects that are illusory. Do not strive for a perishable attainment. Gain insight into the nature of the Self. Do not wander in the world-process anymore.

Sections 145-149—*The Muni Explains the Mystery of Karmic Fructifications*

The *muni* continued: O *vyadha*, the innermost Self (*Atman*) in you is beyond the three states—waking, dream and deep sleep. Though formless and beyond the reach of mental thoughts, that *Atman* sustains this entire creation.

When the mind of an aspirant melts in enlightenment, the awareness of multiplicity is lost in the non-duality of *Brahman*.

The *vyadha* asked: O Sage, you know the mystery of creation. Please explain to me how souls experience, like a dream within a dream, their different embodiments through a vast span of time and space.

The *muni* replied: Listen to my experience. Recall how I entered the body of a sleeping disciple and became blended with his dream experience.

Within his subtle body, I had an amazing experience. I lost the memory of my spiritual knowledge. Days, months, seasons and years rolled on.

No longer did I reflect upon the truth, "I am *Brahman*." Rather, I became attached to wife, children and relatives. Sixteen years passed as a householder.

One day a revered *muni* (*muni* No. 2) arrived at my home. He was endowed with immense spiritual knowledge. I welcomed him and offered my hospitality with deep devotion.

When he had taken food and rested, I held spiritual conversations with him. I (*muni* No. 1) asked him: O Sage, you are the storehouse of knowledge. Not the slightest agitation can touch your mind. You are not attached to anything.

It is my understanding that as a person sows, accordingly he reaps. Every *jiva* (individual soul) experiences pleasure or pain according his karmas.

How is it that sometimes a whole village experiences the same calamity, such as a famine or epidemic? Are their negative karmas alike?

The *muni* (No. 2) replied with a smile: O gentle one, first you must gain insight into the nature of this world. Is it real or unreal? Do you know who you are essentially, or where you are located?

Try to reflect upon, "Who am I?" What is the nature of this world? What is essential and what is non-essential?

Do you realize that I am a person in your dream and you, in turn, exist in mine? This world is of the nature of indescribable illusion. It exists like reflections in the Crystal of Consciousness (your own essential Self).

It is that Self which has become this world of multiplicity. It is *Brahman* that expresses through all these names and forms. As long as an individual soul is overpowered by ignorance, it continues to experience karmic fructifications.

From a relative point of view, those *jivas* which have similar negative karmas come together to experience a calamity that befalls the group, just as lightning strikes a group of trees in a forest.

Do not try to find the cause for your dreams. The most important thing is to wake up from the long dream and become enlightened. This world, being illusory, is not linked to *Brahman* through a real causation.

When the *jiva* becomes free from the dream of karmic bondage, it discovers its identity as *Brahman*. All this is, indeed, nothing but *Brahman*. While the illusory world is filled with misery, *Brahman* is eternal, immutable and supremely auspicious.

There are countless world-systems through which countless souls work their way to spiritual evolution and liberation as they continue to experience the cycles of birth and death.

It is the Power of Consciousness (*Chit-shakti*) that has imagined, "I am a limited personality. I am this incarnating soul." And it is this Power that can undo this erroneous notion and discover, "I am *Brahman*—the Absolute Self."

Sections 150-151—*The Vyadha Attains Enlightenment*

The *muni* (No. 1) continued: Having heard the nectarine teachings of the *muni* (No. 2), I became enlightened. That *muni* whose teachings have enlightened me is right here.

Look at him seated by your side. He is the same one who imparted to me that enlightening wisdom.

The *vyadha* asked: O Sage, how is it possible that the *muni* (No. 2) who visited you in a dream world is here seated by me? How can the dream world become real?

The *muni* (No. 1) continued: O *vyadha*, listen to me with patience. Having received the teachings of that *muni* (No. 2), I recalled my previous state—I was the *muni* who had entered the subtle body of a sleeping person in an *ashram*. All my experiences evolved in the dream world of the sleeping person.

I said to the *muni* (No. 2): O Sage, permit me to go into my natural world. I want to go to the *ashram* in which my previous body lies next to the body of the person into whom I had entered.

Thus saying I departed from that place.

The *muni* (No. 2) laughed aloud and said: O *muni*, where are those two bodies? You may try to find them.

The *muni* (No. 1) continued: I entered into deep meditation and then adopting a mystic path, I traversed through the vastness of space; but I could not find the subtle opening at the throat of the person into whose body I had entered. I returned to find the *muni* (No. 2) waiting for me.

The *muni* (No. 2) explained to me: Do not be surprised. While you were caught in the world of dream there was an

outbreak of fire in that forest that consumed the *ashram* and burned it to ashes. The two bodies—yours as well as the body of the person into whom you had entered—are utterly destroyed.

You should know that the will of Brahma (the Cosmic Mind) sustains this world. In fact, this world is a projection of the Cosmic Mind. According to the will of the creator, the world systems come and go. But the underlying reality—*Brahman*—never changes. You are essentially that *Brahman*.

Sections 152-155—*The State of Enlightenment*

The *muni* (No. 1) continued: O *vyadha*, having received the wisdom of this *muni* (No. 2), I have become enlightened. All my miseries and sorrows have terminated. I am not sustained by anyone, nor do I sustain anyone. I am enjoying supreme peace, and am immersed in the bliss of *nirvana* (liberation).

For me there is nothing internal or external. I am not bound by the rules of what should be done and what should not be done.

The *vyadha* said: O Sage, if that is so, then we are all in a dream world. I am a dream person in your dream, and you are a dream person in my dream; and the same applies to all the objects and beings of this world—all this is indeed a long dream.

The *muni* (No. 1) replied: Yes, this is so. You have attained knowledge. You may do as you like. However, you should continue to take recourse to *abhyasa*—repeated practice of enquiry and reflection—until you become firmly rooted in the wisdom, “I am *Brahman*.”

By the practice of *guru seva* (service of guru) and study of scriptures, when the erroneous vision of multiplicity is corrected, the mind in a person is transformed and led to *nirvana* (liberation).

O *vyadha*, he who has become free of attachments, who is ever immersed in the awareness, “I am *Brahman*,” who is free of all desires, who is not affected by joy and sorrow—he attains liberation.

The *vyadha* began to live in the company of spiritual seekers, and practiced austerity for a long time. Unable to find the restful state of enlightenment, he approached the *muni* (No. 1).

The *vyadha* said: O Sage, I have practiced austerity for a long, long time and yet I am unable to find peace within myself. When will I rest in *Brahman*?

The *muni* (No. 1) replied: The knowledge that I have imparted to you is like fire burning dimly in a heap of wood. Continue practicing with patience until that fire becomes strong. It will surely consume all the illusions of your mind. You are bound to attain supreme peace.

Sections 156-158—*The Vyadha's Future and His Enlightenment*

The *muni* continues: After discarding your massive body, you will incarnate as the king known as Sindhu. You will fight against Viduratha (see the story of Lila) and will kill him.

King Sindhu will learn from his minister that Viduratha had secured a boon from Goddess Saraswati for attaining liberation. Therefore, he will be killed by you. Thus, the minister will impart to the king the knowledge of the Self.

Having learned this, you, in the embodiment of King Sindhu, will renounce the kingdom and will practice intense austerity for attaining liberation. As a result of constant good association and reflection on the nature of the Self, you will finally attain liberation and become free from the cycles of birth and death.

Having told the future, the *muni* said to the *vyadha*: You have heard about your future. Now you may do as you wish.

The fire god related the above story to King Vipashchita and said: Having heard about his future, the *vyadha* was filled with a sense of wonder. As time passed, the *vyadha* and the *muni* continued to live together, practicing their spiritual meditations. In course of time, the *muni* left the physical body and his spirit became one with *Brahman*.

The *vyadha*, on the other hand, lived to experience all that was foretold to him by the *muni*. He did practice intense

austerity and received from the creator the boon of possessing a massive body. That body coursed through space, becoming bigger and bigger, until the *vyadha* developed dispassion and brought about the end of his body by his own willpower.

O Vipashchita, it was that very massive corpse of the *vyadha* which you had encountered. It is this very world that was once covered with that corpse. Now go wherever you desire. I am now departing for Indra Loka, where the celestial lord, Indra, is invoking my presence in the performance of a sacrifice.

Thus saying the fire god disappeared.

Sections 159-160—*Ignorance and Enlightenment*

King Bhasa (as he relates his mysterious story in the palace of King Dasharatha) said: O King, after the disappearance of the fire god, I continued to wander in this world-process led by my *samskaras* (impressions) of the unconscious mind. I traveled through countless world-systems, saw countless living beings, and experienced countless wonders. Finally I became disgusted with this unending project of finding the end of the universe.

Then I began to practice intense austerity. After a lapse of time, Indra appeared before me, saying: O Vipashchita, you will have one more incarnation before you can attain enlightenment. You will be born as a deer, and your destiny will lead you to the royal court of King Dasharatha. There

you will receive your former body—the body of King Bhasa—by the grace of Sage Vasistha.

Thus, O Ramachandra, I have related before this royal assembly my long and amazing story that illustrates the mystery of ignorance with its ramifying branches.

All this has proceeded from *Brahman*, all this is contained in *Brahman*, all this indeed is *Brahman*. Therefore, nothing is impossible by the power of Divine *Maya*.

As King Vipashchita (Bhasa) continued to tell his story, the day declined, and Sage Vasistha declared the termination of the session for the day. Members of the audience rose up and went to their different abodes, and on the next day they all assembled in the royal court of King Dasharatha.

Sage Vasistha continued: All this is *Brahman* or the Absolute Self. But as long as the individual soul is overpowered by ignorance, it continues to wander in the world-process, passing through numerous embodiments.

Led by good karmas, the soul experiences heavenly worlds. On the other hand, led by evil karmas, the soul is led to hellish worlds in which it experiences countless torments.

Sections 161-162—*Brahman is the Reality behind All This Multiplicity*

Sage Vasistha continued: By the practice of reflection and enquiry this world dissolves into *Brahman*. This is so

because the reality behind all forms of duality is *Brahman* alone.

A person's consciousness projects a dream world for its enjoyment. The projected dream world is nothing but that consciousness. In the same manner, this world-process is nothing but the Self.

The numerous objects of dream have no reality in themselves. In the same manner, the numerous objects of this world are mere appearances sustained by the Self.

Those who are enlightened see this world as unreal. However, it is perceived as real by the ignorant. The knower possesses the internalized vision that perceives *Brahman* as the reality behind all names and forms, while the ignorant, possessing externalized vision, perceives the world of multiplicity.

This world is a blend of the Eternal Self, which is the Truth, and perishable matter, which is illusory. The enlightened sage has his vision centered on the Eternal Self, while the unenlightened have their vision centered on perishable matter.

This world is as illusory as castles of the mind, as transient as dewdrops hanging by the tips of glistening leaves. The knowers of the Self negate this world; therefore, they have no need to know the world. The ignorant hold that the world is real, but this world eludes their grasp when they strive to know it.

Like waves from the ocean, flames from fire, or echoes from space, so does this illusory world seem to proceed from *Brahman*. In fact, it is as unreal as the mountain seen in a dream.

O Rama, find eternal rest in the Self and stop wandering in this illusory world. You are your own friend as well as your own enemy. If you do not enlighten yourself, you cannot be saved by anyone.

While you are endowed with youthful vigor, you should cross this ocean of the world-process by adopting the boat of pure intellect. What is to be done for your own good must be done immediately. What can you accomplish when you are assailed by old age? Then, even mere maintenance of the body becomes a difficult task.

Both childhood and old age are animal-like states, during which nothing much can be accomplished. If one is endowed with *viveka* or spiritual understanding during his youth, he indeed is alive. Otherwise, there is no difference between him and an animal.

Having come into this world, which is as fleeting as flashes of lightning, one must strive to attain Self-realization through good association and study of scriptures.

Alas! It is regrettable that human beings are inconceivably cruel to themselves. Though they are sunk in the marsh of the world-process up to their necks, yet they are not striving for their release by taking recourse to the teachings of the scriptures.

When you realize that the ghost that frightened you was nothing but an earthen statue, you are no longer afflicted by it. In the same way, when you discover *Brahman* as the reality behind this ghost-like world, fear, death, and sufferings no longer assail you.

Like the deer caught in a forest fire, the senses continue to wander restlessly among the objects of the world. O Rama, having mastered the senses, destroy ignorance by knowledge and become liberated from the cycles of birth and death.

Waking is dream. Dream is waking. This is so because both are negated in course of time. There is nothing abiding in waking or in dream.

As long as one lives, one continues to see numerous dreams. These dreams do not follow any definite rule. In the same manner, until one attains liberation, he continues to experience numerous dreams in the form of his waking experiences through numerous embodiments.

Just as a person recalls his many dreams, yogis, by the practice of special mental concentration, are able to recall the experiences of many past lives.

The world of dream is in reality void of all objects; it is nothing but Pure Consciousness. In the same manner, this waking world is also nothing but Pure Consciousness.

That which exists after the termination of all these illusions is the same as I am at all times. Bondage is created by My own imaginations.

O Rama, do not impose bondage on the Self, Which is ever free. The Self in you is like the sky. It cannot be fettered by the drifting clouds of names and forms that do not exist in reality. It is Pure Consciousness that appears to enter into the dream of the world-process.

The light that illumines the waking state also illumines the dream state. That light of Consciousness is the essence of waking and dream.

The world of duality is identical to the knowledge of duality. The essence of knowledge is Pure Consciousness. Thus it is *Brahman* (Pure Consciousness) that appears as dual or non-dual, or in the form of multiplicity of objects.

Just as a rock of salt is nothing but a mass of saline taste, in the same manner, *Brahman* is nothing but a mass of bliss. Having negated the world of multiplicity, become one with the blissful rock of *Brahman*.

Thus abiding in *Brahman*, you may continue to perform your duties in life; you may eat, travel, feed others, and perform various duties that are in harmony with the rules of righteousness.

Section 163—Mastering the Senses and Attaining Enlightenment

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, since it is impossible to attain Self-realization without controlling the senses, please explain to me how these senses can be controlled.

Sri Vasistha replied: O Rama, mental attachment to the objects of the world is the cause of uncontrolled senses. Just as external lamps become ineffective for one who is blind, in the same way, the scriptures become ineffective in bringing about Self-realization in those who are blinded by attachments.

The individual soul is dependent upon the *chitta* (mind) and thus becomes deeply involved in whatever thought dominates the *chitta*. Therefore, it is important to check the externalized movement of the *chitta* so that it can be directed towards the Self through an internalized process.

By the practice of *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses), the elephant-*chitta* is controlled, and by the piercing spear of intuitive wisdom it is completely mastered. Thus, when the *chitta* is restrained, the senses are effectively conquered. It is impossible to master the senses without conquering the *chitta*.

The *chitta* is the general-in-chief of the army of the senses. It is the controller, director and ruler of the senses. When the *chitta* is mastered, the senses are automatically mastered. When the feet are covered with leather, the whole world becomes free from thorns. In the same way, when the senses are mastered, the world of objects becomes deprived of the thorns of attachment and hatred.

When the soul abides in the Self through the internalized movement of the *chitta*, the latter dissolves like mist in the blue sky. Therefore, this soul must be led to its union with the Divine Self through constant effort to maintain the thought of *Brahman*.

Whatever the mind remembers by the force of worldly impressions should be reduced to its underlying essence—*Brahman*—by the force of spiritual enquiry. The pure impressions of *Brahmakara vritti* (thought of *Brahman*) can annihilate the worldly impressions. When the mind becomes incapable of falling under the sway of memories that are sustained by the illusion of egoistic consciousness, one attains Self-realization.

O Rama, adopt the path of *swadharma*—performance of action that is in harmony with your spiritual progress. This leads to the development of dispassion. Dispassion brings about control of the senses. Those who perform their duties by renouncing inner attachments cultivate the virtues of serenity and contentment, which are expressions of mastery over the senses.

The mind that is never tired of seeking increasing taste in the Self and distaste in the objects of the world attains stillness in a short time. When the soul abides in the Divine Self the mind gives up its deep-rooted habit of running after the objects of the world. It develops discrimination (*viveka*) between the Self and the not-Self.

A man of discrimination is called *mahashaya*—a person with a magnanimous heart. His thoughts and feelings are like swans that fly to the sweet lakes of the sublime states of spiritual consciousness. But those who lack discrimination are like vultures and kites that soar high in the sky only to stoop down to the rotting pleasures of the senses.

In order to develop magnanimity of spirit, one must take recourse to good association and the study of scriptures. Just

as a person who is afflicted in his dreams becomes restful when he wakes up, in the same way, with the knowledge of *Brahman*, the soul wakes up from the dream of the world-process.

A stream that is dried up by the sun is unable to flow on. In the same way, the stream of the world-process is reduced to nothingness by the wisdom of the Self and disappears from one's view.

This world of "I" and "you" is an expression of ignorance. It is the light of Consciousness that manifests in the form of the world-process. Just as the moon fills the sky with its lustrous light, in the same way, this universe is filled with the light of the Self.

The memories of objects that arise in dream are illusory. In the same way, the perceptible objects of the world are in fact unreal. Though dreams are very real to the dreamer, they are seen as illusory when one wakes up. In the same way, the world becomes illusory when one wakes up to the intuitional realization of the Self.

The concepts of duality and non-duality are accepted for imparting wisdom to disciples. In the state of wisdom all these concepts are replaced by the blazing radiance of Self-realization.

Spiritual enquiry is the broom with which you can sweep off the dust of duality from the courtyard of your inner consciousness. Burn down ignorance by spiritual knowledge, and sweep off its ashes from your consciousness by the broom of *vichara* (spiritual enquiry).

Whatever the mind remembers by the force of worldly impressions should be reduced to its underlying essence—*Brahman*—by the force of spiritual enquiry. The pure impressions of *Brahmakara vritti* (thought of *Brahman*) can annihilate the worldly impressions. When the mind becomes incapable of falling under the sway of memories that are sustained by the illusion of egoistic consciousness, one attains Self-realization.

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When the dust of ignorance is removed from the soul, the mind of a yogi becomes merged in *Brahman* and his *pranas* also abide in *Brahman*. In fact a sage lives and breathes in the Divine Self.

Keeping this blessed goal in view, an aspirant should constantly reflect upon the nature of the Self. He should constantly think of the Self and talk about the Self. He should express the Divine wisdom of the Self through his entire personality. By doing so he will become firmly established in the Self.

Even for attaining the trifles of the world certain effort is needed. How much more important it is, then, to maintain effort for attaining *Brahman*, wherein the highest limit of bliss can be experienced.

Why do you endeavor to attain perishable pleasures of the world when it is possible for you to gain *Brahmic* bliss? Before the majesty of that bliss, all the joys of the world—those experienced by the smallest creatures to the highest beings such as Prajapati—become as insignificant as straw.

Those who are sunk in this illusory world experience a world-process, whether sleeping (in dreams) or waking. In the same way, a sage whose mind is lit up with the light of intuition perceives *Brahman*, whether sleeping or waking.

Liberation is a fruit on the tree of *abhyasa* or repeated effort. Only rare souls such as Divine sages do not need repeated practice of spiritual affirmation for attaining Self-

realization. The majority of aspirants must take recourse to a repeated process of directing the mind again and again to *Brahman* in order to remove the veil of ignorance.

Even an ignorant person can attain enlightenment by taking recourse to the repeated effort of studying and reflecting upon the teachings of this scripture.

Those who turn away from this scripture with a spirit of vain indifference continue to keep themselves deprived of the blessed goal of liberation. This scripture must be revered like the *Vedas* because it offers the fruit of liberation, which is the goal of the Vedic teachings.

Those who ignore this scripture are killers of their own soul. They drag themselves into the pits of delusion through repeated births and deaths.

Those who ignore the holy waters of the Ganges by asserting that they will continue to drink from the wells that were dug by their forefathers continue to taste the salty waters of the world-process.

Section 164—*Brahman as the Basis of Jiva and Jagat*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, like the dazzling rays of light proceeding from the sun, this world is filled with the light of the Self. The multiplicity of names and forms is sustained by mental illusion alone.

The differences that exist among the individual souls and the objects of the world are due to differences in limiting adjuncts. Just as space assumes different shapes and sizes in

different pots, vessels, halls, etc., in the same way, *Brahman* assumes the role of different individual souls, as well as numerous objects, due to the limiting adjuncts of illusory names and forms.

Brahman, which is realized by the sages, is absolutely devoid of all differences and impurities. The impurity of duality cannot exist in *Brahman*, which is homogeneous and one without a second.

While the ignorant live in a world of impurity defined by "I" and "you," sages live in Pure Consciousness. In that Consciousness there is neither "I" nor "you." The Absolute Self alone exists.

Those who are exhausted and thirsty perceive mirage in a desert. But those who live in the heavenly world are neither exhausted nor thirsty. Why then should they need the waters of mirage? Much in the same way, those who have been wandering in the world of illusion and have been afflicted with the thirst for worldly enjoyments are deluded by the multiplicity of names and forms. Sages, on the other hand, rest in the Self and are fully satisfied as they drink the nectarine bliss of *Brahman*. This is the reason they do not see the mirage of the world-process.

The shadows of twilight vanish with the rising of the sun. So too, the perception of the world is drowned in the awareness of *Brahman*.

It is Pure Consciousness that sustains the illusory worlds of dream as well as of mental imaginations. With the

removal of illusion by knowledge, this world merges in the Absolute Self.

The ignorant perceive the world in terms of individuality and universality. On the other hand, the wise behold the non-dual Self, surging with the waters of fullness.

The Cosmic Being is termed as *Virat*, *Hiranyagarbha*, and *Ishwara* in the physical, astral and causal planes respectively. The reality behind that Cosmic Being, as well as behind the physical, astral, and causal planes of the individual being, is *Brahman* or the Absolute alone.

Section 165—*The Similarity of Dream and Waking States*

Sri Vasistha continued: The three states—waking, dream and deep sleep—blend in different forms to give rise to this world of illusion. Often dream is intensified into a waking state, and the waking state emerges out of dream. The individual soul, having awakened from one dream, enters into another in the dark night of ignorance.

A sage who is intuitionally awake considers the waking world as a dream phenomenon, while an ignorant person with increasing limitation in his consciousness considers the dream state itself to be a waking state of reality. Dream is contradicted by waking, and waking is contradicted by dream. In fact, both of them are illusory.

Dreams appear to be of a shorter duration than the waking state of consciousness. However, this is a matter of relativity. Only in the state of wakefulness does a person

consider his dream to be of a shorter duration. Even time in the waking world becomes of a shorter duration when viewed by a highly integrated mind.

No matter how real this world may appear to be, it subsides during one's death, as well as during the state of liberation. During one's death, the world subsides temporarily, because one enters into the dream of disembodiment; but during the state of liberation it subsides fully, along with the eradication of its very root—ignorance.

The world of one's dream is a magic show of the Self alone. In the same way, the world of the waking state of consciousness is nothing but the dazzling rays of the same Self.

The subject that perceives the world, the senses and mind by which the world is perceived, as well as this perceptible world—all these are illusions sustained by the reality of the Self. Overpowered by ignorance one continues to dream in the illusion of triad (subject, object and the interaction between the two). But with the removal of ignorance, one rises beyond the triad and no longer hankers for the petty pleasures of the world.

**Section 166—*The Negation of Khyatis*
(*The Theories Explaining Superimposition*
Are Illusory)**

Sri Vasistha said: Philosophers hold different theories to explain the manner in which the Self pervades this world.

But in fact, the Self alone is. All these theories are as erroneous as the horns of a hare. It is the Self that permeates the Self. Having discovered this, may you become established in the rock-like immutability of the Self.

Adopting the illustration of the phenomenon of "snake-in-the-rope," different philosophical systems present different explanations. On the basis of their explanations they expound different theories about the world-process.

The nihilists explain that the snake superimposed upon the rope is utterly non-existent. Thus, the whole world is non-existent. This is known as *asat khyati*—the pervasion of non-existence.

Those who believe in the transience of intellectual awareness say that the intellect, having assumed a momentary modification, gives rise to the perception of snake-in-the-rope. According to them this world is mental in nature. There is no reality other than the ideas of one's own mind. This view is incorrect, because the world cannot be the content of an individual's mind. If it were so, an individual would have created and destroyed the world according to his whims. This theory is called *aima khyati*—the pervasion of the little self (intellect).

The Naiyayika philosophers explain that a real snake existing elsewhere is seen superimposed upon the rope due to a certain defect in one's vision. In the same way, this world is a reality. This view is called *anyatha khyati*—pervasion of another reality upon an object. The Samkhya philosophers refute this.

According to Samkhya philosophers, the illusory perception "*this is a snake*" is composed of two perceptions: "This is" refers to the substratum—the rope, and "a snake" refers to a previous memory of having seen a snake. Due to the obscurity caused by darkness, these two become blended to give rise to the illusion of perceiving "*this is a snake.*" In other words, the non-existent world of memory is superimposed on *Brahman* or the Self due to lack of discrimination. This theory is called *akhyati khyati*—the pervasion of non-discrimination.

According to Vedanta philosophers, when darkness is removed the rope is discovered, and both the snake and knowledge of the snake disappear. When the illusion is negated, the rope alone is. In the same way, with the negation of *Maya*, *Brahman* alone is the reality behind this universe. This is called *anirvachaniya khyati*—the pervasion of indescribable *Maya*. It is indescribable because it is as well as it is not. The world is when a person is overcome by *Maya*; it is not when *Maya* is removed.

However, even the indescribability of Vedanta is further transcended when a sage is established in the realization of the Self. The illusion of the world vanishes from his view. The Self alone exists. It is the absolute theory of the pervasion of the Self by the Self.

O Rama, listen to an interesting parable. There exists a vast rock constituted of a material as abstract as the blue sky. It extends for millions of miles. In this homogeneous rock there is no division, no junction, and no hollows. It is indestructible. Its beauty is indescribable. It is even purer than the sky.

There is nothing equal to this immense rock. It is impossible to confine it to a definite time and space. In the depths of this rock there exist universes containing numerous beings, like reflections in a mirror.

This rock is indivisible. We exist in the depths of this rock like reflected lines. As one line would view other lines, so we view this world—but in fact the rock is a mass of indivisible existence.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, please explain to me the meaning of this parable. Where is this rock, and how are we confined to it?

Sri Vasistha explained: This rock is *Brahman*. We are all illusory portions of the body of *Brahman*. By the force of ignorance this indivisible *Brahman* develops its limbs in the form of five elements. Time, space, activity, and cause and effect relationships—all these are seen as different parts of *Brahman*. The entire universe exists in the depths of the rock-like *Brahman*.

When the intellect is rid of its limitations, one realizes *Brahman* as the only reality and the world of illusion is effaced forever. With the discovery of *Brahman*, the world and its limited knowledge vanish, even as dream vanishes when a person wakes up.

Sections 167-169—*The Glory of Enlightenment*

Sage Vasistha continued: For an enlightened sage, whose mind flows towards the Divine Self, the objects of pleasure

are no longer pleasurable, and the objects of pain are no longer painful. Such a sage is liberated.

While the mind of the unenlightened does not turn away from the objects of the world, the mind of a sage is unable to detach itself from the Divine Self. Such a sage is liberated.

He whose mind has attained supreme rest in the Divine Self and is unable to find pleasure in the objects of the world is indeed liberated.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, is not such a person inert who is insensitive to pleasure and pain caused by the objects of the world?

Sri Vasistha replied: A sage is not insensitive like a rock, rather he is ever immersed in the intensity of Divine awareness. It is with effort on his part that he becomes aware of the pleasures of objects, while his inward experience of Divine bliss is effortless.

For one whose doubts have been dispelled by discriminative knowledge and who thus rests in the Self, for him all limitations are broken. The very knots of the heart are rent asunder.

Though active in this world of practical reality, a sage does not harbor attachment towards any object of the world. Therefore, he rests in the Supreme Self.

Sustaining his life on the basis of his fructifying karma, he maintains a balanced mind devoid of desire and egoistic

will. Therefore, he rests in the Supreme Self.

Having traveled across this toilsome desert of the world-process, where there is no resting place or real sustenance, where the path is long and dreary, he has attained rest in the Self. He is adored by all.

Having wandered through numerous embodiments, a sage has finally attained the cessation of the world-process. He no longer runs after the objects of the world. Sweet mystic sleep seems to overwhelm his consciousness. Though active in the world he is devoid of the mental anxiety caused by desires.

He has discovered his identity with the transcendental Self that illumines the world of subject and object, seer and sight. He does not abide in this world any more.

A sage is like one who sleeps peacefully, having withdrawn himself from the city of dreams. He enjoys sleepless sleep because he abides in the fourth state of consciousness, transcending waking, dream and deep sleep.

Having attained the end of a very long journey, he is unable to utter a word because he is filled with inward bliss. His silence is not because of his insensitivity, but because of immense bliss.

While most people in the world slumber in the darkness of ignorance, a sage continues to be awake and active. But in the world of painful objects in which the masses are awake, a sage enjoys perennial sleep.

Having turned away from the world of egoistic activities, a sage sports in the Self, enjoys in the Self, and abides in the Self. Having crossed the ocean of the world-process, he enjoys profound rest in the shining shores of the Self.

He has wandered through toilsome roads. He has been robbed and tortured by robbers in the form of the sense-objects. To add to his misery, he has been pelted by hail storms in the form of old age and afflicted by the thorns of numerous miseries.

He has stumbled many times into the pitfalls created by his evil karmas. In the course of his wanderings he encountered a guide in the form of a spiritual preceptor. He followed his instructions, and having crossed the forest of the world-process, he now sleeps peacefully in the Self, wherein there is no need for a cushioned bed.

It is said that a horse of a high pedigree enjoys sleep during eating, walking, standing, and at all times. It wakes up only when it has a battle to fight. A sage is very similar to that horse—ever immersed in the “sleep” of non-duality. However, while a horse must wake up at the time of battle, the sage has no need to ever wake up to the world of multiplicity. He has already attained eternal freedom in the battle of life.

The sleep that is enjoyed by a sage is unique in nature. Even the thundering clouds during the end of creation cannot awaken him. Nor can he be awakened even if his body is cut down by weapons.

Even without closing his eyes, a sage sees the disappear-

ance of the world. Intoxicated by this mystic experience, he enjoys blissful sleep in his very Self.

A sage has, as it were, swallowed this world in his expansive consciousness. And now he enjoys the nectar of bliss ceaselessly as he continues to slumber in mystic sleep.

Even in the absence of worldly pleasures, the bliss enjoyed by a sage is beyond comparison. His consciousness is the Light unto all lights. He sleeps in his essential nature.

He is devoid of anger, desire, greed and infatuation. The night of ignorance, which harbors these forces of darkness, has come to an end. His bliss is beyond human imagination.

He sleeps so soundly that even the severest type of adversity does not agitate his awareness. Enjoying the bliss of his inner Self, he is ever detached from the external objects of the world.

Having spread the bed of Pure Consciousness, he allows his Self, which is subtler than the subtlest and greater than the greatest, to rest on that bed peacefully. In fact his Self rests in the Self.

He is even subtler than the atom, and yet he is all-pervading. He upholds millions of worlds in his mystic body, and yet he sleeps peacefully. What a wonder!

Having withdrawn the dream of the world-process within his consciousness, he enjoys profound sleep. He permeates even the expansive ether as he enjoys sleep in his infinite

consciousness. The snoring sounds of inhalation and exhalation of breath do not interrupt his sleep.

Having become the Self, he sees this world existing in a remote corner, as it were. And freed from its turmoil, he sleeps soundly.

Just as a person who is fully awake is able to recollect his dream with great effort, in the same way, a sage develops awareness of the world with great effort, and at the same time he is fully established in the Self.

Though ever abiding in mystic sleep, a sage continues to enter into this theatrical show of the world as an actor. He acts as if he sleeps, dreams, and wakes up in his daily life.

While playing the part of living and moving in this world, he is constantly attended by his Divine friend, whose family members are serenity, self-control, forbearance, wisdom, dispassion, contentment and all Divine qualities. Assisted by these he sports until he enters into the bodiless state of liberation.

Section 170—*The Liberated Sage Sports with His Friend and His Friend's Divine Family*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, who is this friend of a liberated sage? Please tell me more about the family members of this friend who assist him as he sports in this world.

Sri Vasistha said: Karma is the friend of the sage. It has three aspects: spontaneous actions; actions performed for the welfare of the world; and actions that promote good association, study of scriptures, and the practice of various spiritual disciplines. This karma is backed up by a highly purified mind. It does not obstruct the knowledge of the sage; rather it enhances the sportive delights of the sage.

This friend in the form of good karma is like a father infusing courage during the adversities of life. It is like a beloved wife restraining a person from evil actions. It is an inseparable companion for the sage.

This karma serves the sage whole-heartedly. It bestows the bliss of liberation upon the sage. It is the very embodiment of faith and conviction. It promotes discriminative knowledge in a human being.

Just as the sun removes darkness, good karma removes the darkness of egoistic desires. It reveals that which is truly dear to the soul. It is always gentle, affectionate, free from agitation, and non-procrastinating. It is intent upon bestowing the highest good upon the sage.

This friend has four sons: Purity, Charity, Austerity and Meditation. These sons are the delight of the hearts of all living beings. Mudita (Cheerfulness) is the beloved wife of this friend. Like the lustrous rays of the full moon, she continues to shower bliss in all directions. Further, this friend of the liberated sage has two other wives in the form of Samata (Equanimity) and Maitri (Friendliness). They are

very dear to their lord. Purified Intellect, which is always attracted towards patience and righteousness, is the gatekeeper of the friend. Wherever the friend goes, these wives, sons and gatekeeper go along with him.

Satyata (Truthfulness) is his treasurer. Thus, the friend of the *jivanmukta* (liberated sage) is ever ready to attend on the sage along with his wives, sons, gatekeeper and treasurer. In the midst of these companions, a sage sports freely in this world.

In the midst of people who are discussing worthless topics, a sage remains absolutely dumb. With reference to essenceless words, he is stone-deaf. He is dead towards all activities that are not supported by the law of righteousness. However, he is like the thousand-tongued Shesha serpent for expounding the rules of righteous conduct. He is like Brihaspati (the preceptor of gods) for promoting spiritual knowledge. He is an excellent teacher for understanding the heart of his disciples and for removing their doubts as effortlessly as the winking of the eyes. A sage is endowed with the qualities of magnanimity, charity, universal love, compassion, spiritual beauty, and righteousness.

Section 171—*Negation of the World Phenomena*

Sri Vasistha continued: The Self continues to be unaffected, though apparently moving from waking to dream, and from dream to deep sleep. In the same manner, the Self

is the same during creation, at the time of dissolution, and after the dissolution of the world.

Just as air assumes different forms in storm, hurricane, gentle breeze, and rough winds, in the same way, the Self assumes different forms without losing Its immutable nature. The differences are perceived by ignorance alone.

When the Self is known, the three worlds cease to exist. Just as the mountains of one's dream cease to exist during the waking state, in the same way, this tangible world disappears from one's view in the light of intuitional wisdom.

Between any two perceptions that arise in the mind is the Absolute or *Brahman*. It is in the light of the Absolute Self that a thought-wave of the mind, having yielded the knowledge of an object, moves on to another thought-wave. When there is nothing to be illumined by the thought-waves of the mind, the Self continues to shine on with Its own light. Therefore, one must seek the underlying basis of the thought-waves.

The knowers of scriptures consider objects that are perceived by the senses, thoughts and feelings perceived by the mind, and all names and forms to be like waves in the ocean of the Divine Self.

It is indeed regrettable that the world does not exist and yet it is believed to be existing, and *Brahman*, Who alone exists, is interpreted as non-existent due to the delusions of the mind.

Where can I turn to other than *Brahman*, which is my essential nature? This world does not exist. How can I perceive that which is non-existent? Such is the experience of the wise.

That Self is the Light of all lights. It is by the light of the Self that the sun shines and the moon sends forth its gentle light. All these objects of the world are like sparks proceeding from the Self.

That Self is the indivisible, infinite, and eternal Pure Consciousness. It is this very Self that appears in the form of the world-process due to ignorance.

Dream is made up of the same stuff as deep sleep. The waking state is similar to dream. *Turiya* (the fourth state of transcendental consciousness) is the reality behind the drifting illusions of waking, dream and deep sleep.

A sage is ever established in the Self. Devoid of the distractions of mind caused by ignorance, he enjoys supreme bliss while walking, talking, waking, sleeping, and performing various actions in his daily life.

Living in the world of duality, he abides in non-duality. Even in the midst of painful conditions, he abides in bliss. Though living in the world, he is beyond this world. Nothing remains unachieved by the sage.

A sage is free from desires. Desiring anything other than the Self is the mark of ignorance.

Section 172—*The Negation of Memory*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Sri Rama, Brahma, the creator, is of the nature of Cosmic Mind. His creation is in the form of mental vibrations. In fact, this entire universe is of the nature of Pure Consciousness.

According to the scriptures, every creator (Brahma), at the termination of his creation, enters into *Brahman* or the Absolute. Another Brahma carries on the commencement of a new creation. In spite of the absence of a prior reference or a previous memory, Brahma creates this universe out of his own mind.

This Cosmic Being (Brahma) does not need anything other than himself in creating this universe. Without the aid of material elements or impressions of the past, Brahma creates this universe. This, therefore, shows that this world-process is constituted of mental illusion.

Experiences in dream are illusory—they are not recollections from the past. In the same way, experiences in the waking state are not based on a real past. The world of past, present and future is nothing but the projection of *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion).

In fact, the function of memory in an individual is based upon ignorance. Memory implies an act of recollecting an actual past experience. Since no experience in this world of *Maya* is absolutely real, the impressions formed in the unconscious which cause the awakening of memory are as fictitious as recollecting the experiences of one's dreams.

Objects did not exist in the past, nor do they exist in the present, nor will they exist in the future. How can there be any validity to the function of memory arising in the limited mind of an individual?

Brahman veiled by ignorance becomes the basis of recollection or memory. By the force of meditation and mental concentration, an individual enters into an illusory stream of memory which sustains this world-process. The Self is capable of remembering anything that It wills to remember.

The world-process, memory, and the cycles of birth and death are coexistent. By receiving the teachings of an enlightened guru, one brings about the termination of the world-process. With the cessation of the fictitious function of memory, one recollects, "I am *Brahman*."

This world is neither in the form of a recollection nor in the form of an actual objective existence. Seen in the light of intuition, there is no existence even for the Cosmic Illusion that causes superimposition on *Brahman*.

This world is devoid of a cause. Therefore, neither the visible objects nor their memories are real. One experiences pain on the basis of the visible objects of the world, as well as their memories.

When the mind remembers the death of one's dear relatives, it becomes filled with grief. It is therefore important to have deep insight into the illusoriness and unreality of all objects of the world, whether seen or remembered. Since

the world does not exist, there is absence of bondage, and consequently there is termination of all miseries.

Sections 173-174—*The Negation of Illusion*

Sage Vasistha continued: With the rising of the clear understanding that "All this is *Brahman*," one attains liberation. As long as the mind conceives of reality in the three worlds, one lingers in a state of bondage.

Dream arises without contradicting the state of sleep. In the same way, the state of *jivan mukti* (liberation in life) arises even while the personality of a sage lingers in the dream of the world-process.

This world is like a city in dream. Therefore, a man of wisdom does not develop attachments to the objects of the world. When awakened, the dream is effaced; when enlightened, the Self alone remains.

The numerous desires of dream appear real while one is dreaming. In the same way, the desires of the waking state seem real, but are actually unreal to one who is intuitively awakened. When the fiery wisdom of the unreality of the objects scorches the seeds of worldly impressions, an enlightened sage perceives the world like burned up clothes.

Like a mountain seen in dream, this world exists in the night of ignorance. Different conditions are experienced in dream without any consistent cause or reason. In the same way, even the waking world continues to unravel conditions that baffle human reason and frustrate one's fond desires.

Liberation cannot be attained by mere suppression of thought-waves or by subjecting the senses and the mind to severe austerities. As long as the world is conceived as a reality in one's consciousness, so long liberation is impossible.

When intuitional knowledge arises, the world is recognized as a mere illusion. This terminates the distracting desires of the mind. This is termed as *nirvana*—the extinction of cravings. This is indeed *moksha* or liberation. This is the *nirvikalpa samadhi* of the Vedantins.

The intensity of pure knowledge is called meditation. Wherein the world-process ceases to exist, therein the state of infinite bliss is experienced.

This world is temporarily lost in sleep, in cosmic deluge, and in the deep states of inert *samadhis*. But it is completely lost when intuitional knowledge reveals its falsity.

Brahman is beyond all imaginations of the mind. There is neither difference nor non-difference, neither existence nor non-existence. *Brahman* is the ultimate reality that remains after the negation of the not-Self.

The blessed state of liberation is attained by studying this scripture and meditating upon its teachings. Without this scriptural understanding, by the mere practice of various religious disciplines such as pilgrimage, acts of charity, meditation, austerity, and sacrifices, one cannot attain the cessation of the world-process. Illusion cannot be removed without the wisdom gained by the study of this scripture. Night cannot disappear without the rising of the sun.

Section 175—*The Self Alone Exists*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, the Primeval Consciousness assumes the role of an individual soul due to ignorance, and enters into the dream of the world-process by developing identification with the physical body sustained by desire, action, and subtle impressions.

Prior to creation the Self alone exists. Just as a person experiences various objects during dream, so too, this Self experiences numerous objects through the multiplicity of souls in the dream of the world-process. When the world is realized as unreal, the soul in a sage discovers its essential identity as the non-dual Self.

As long as the Supreme Self is not known, so long there exists the impurity of ignorance. When the Self is known, ignorance vanishes. Just as a dreamer realizes the illusion of his dreams when he wakes up, in the same way, one realizes the illusion of the world-process when one wakes up to the awareness of the Self.

This Self is purer than the purest that the human mind can conceive of. This creation arises as a wave in the Self. In fact, the pure Self alone surges with the resplendent waters of its own purity.

This Self appears as the Cosmic Mind, even as the ocean appears in the form of waves. The Cosmic Mind continues to create and destroy this world ceaselessly, even as thoughts rise and fall in the human mind.

The Cosmic Mind becomes the individual soul as well as the physical universe by the force of Cosmic Illusion. When a person is endowed with a subtle penetrating vision, he realizes the falsity of this entire creation.

With the realization of the Self one attains supreme contentment. Even while engaged in the daily activities of life, a sage does not lose his inward serenity. He continues to enjoy the bliss of the Self in the silence of his heart.

Uninterrupted by the closing and opening of the eyelids, the eyes remain the same. Similarly, the Self remains the same during creation and destruction, which are like the closing and opening of the eyelids of the Cosmic Being.

It is deep sleep that is modified into the dream state. It is the Transcendental Self that undergoes an illusory modification and manifests in the three states—sleep, dream and waking.

Ignorance is the cause of the mind, the visible objects, and the body. Our teaching (*Yoga Vasistha*) intends to efface this triad from one's consciousness. Those who wish to turn to the *Upanishads* instead of *Yoga Vasistha* may do so. The same truth is revealed by those scriptures.

We do not insist that all must study this scripture alone. What is important is that one should not waste one's life, which is like a droplet hanging on the tip of a leaf.

No one can bring back a moment that has slipped by with the help of all his wealth and strength. It is the height of one's

folly to waste this precious life without aspiring for attaining liberation.

Sections 176-179—*Brahman Alone Transcends the Illusion of Multiplicity*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, you have again and again related to me the accounts of countless worlds that existed in the past and will exist in the future. Please explain to me how this knowledge of past and future is effective in promoting enlightenment.

Sage Vasistha explained: O Rama, the purpose of this study is to promote that purified intellect which shows the illusory nature of time. From the point of view of the limited intellect there is a staggering expansion of time, and there are countless world systems whirling in the vastness of space. But from the point of view of the enlightened intellect, there is nothing but *here and now*.

In your dream you experience the same *Brahman* (the Absolute Self) manifesting as the dream world of illusory time and space. In the same way, it is the same *Brahman* that manifests in the form of this visible world extending through the vastness of time and space.

Overpowered by ignorance, *Brahman* assumes the role of the individual soul. Then the soul becomes identified with its own projection—the intellect. The intellect becomes

limited to the mind. The mind becomes conditioned in the form of senses. The senses reveal the world of multiplicity.

All this creation is illusory. Countless objects reflect in the mirror, and yet the mirror is ever untouched. In the same way, the illusions of triad—seer, seen and sight; enjoyer, enjoyment, objects of enjoyment; doer, deed and doing—all these are reflected in the Self, but the Self is ever unaffected and untouched.

With the realization, "I am *Brahman*," the triad disappears. With the absence of the world, there is neither seer, seen nor sight. As long as one slumbers in the sleep of ignorance, countless world-systems appear to flow on like waves that rise and fall on the vastness of the ocean.

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, from the point of view of the enlightened sage, the world does not exist. *Brahman* is the Reality transcending the illusion of time and space.

Just as the dream and deep-sleep states are both modifications of sleep, in the same way, experiences of multiplicity through the world of time and space are modifications of ignorance.

It is the ocean alone that manifests as waves, foam and bubbles. In the same way, *Brahman* alone manifests as the world of multiplicity.

The Ocean of *Brahman* surges on. There is neither

bondage nor release. There is utter negation of the world-process and of the concepts of existence and non-existence.

Sections 180-185—*The Story of Kunda-Danta*

Sri Rama said: O Sage, there is a lingering doubt in my mind. Once I was seated in an assembly of learned scholars. There arrived a *brahmin* from the country of Videha. He saluted the *brahmins* of the congregation and then took his seat. I got up, offered my salutations to him, and asked him:

Sri Rama: O *brahmin*, you have come from a long distance. You must be tired. Please tell me your purpose in coming here.

The *brahmin* answered: O Rama, it is true that I have come here for a special purpose. I am a *brahmin* from Videha country. I have completed my studies of the scriptures. My teeth shine like jasmine flowers, therefore people call me Kunda-Danta.

I developed intense dispassion and began to visit temples, pilgrimage centers, and sacred places. During my wanderings, I met an ascetic (No. 1) in Shree Parvata, who took me to an old ascetic (No. 2) in Gauri Ashrama.

That old ascetic (No. 2) told me the story of himself and his seven brothers—how they practiced austerity and received boons as well as curses; and within the space of their own house they became rulers of different world-systems, and experienced the dissolution of their worlds.

My friend, the old ascetic (No. 2), died. Then, I went to the ascetic (No. 1) who lived by the Kadamba Tree in Shree Parvata. The ascetic said that because he was too engrossed in the practice of *samadhi* he had no time to give me any teaching.

However, he instructed me to go to the country ruled by King Dasharatha, where Sage Vasistha would give Divine teachings to Sri Rama. There I would listen to the teachings and become enlightened.

Sri Rama continued: O Sage, this person seated close by is that Kunda-Danta, who has been listening to your teachings from the very beginning. Please ask him whether his doubts have been dispelled.

Sage Vasistha (turning to Kunda-Danta) asked: O best of *brahmins*, you have been listening to the teachings which I have been giving to Sri Ramachandra. Are your doubts dispelled? Have you become enlightened?

Kunda-Danta replied: O Sage, all my doubts have been dispelled. I have attained the realization, "I am *Brahman*." I have seen that which was to be seen, and known that which was to be known. I have realized the Imperishable Self as my essential identity. Now I am resting in *Brahman*.

All names and forms that are seen and experienced in this world are like showers raining from the clouds of *Satchit-ananda*. *Brahman* is showering from *Brahman*. The fullness of *Brahman* is expressing through this world, which is essentially full. That *Brahman* alone is the Reality behind all that exists.

Sections 186-189—*The Jiva Experiences the World Due to Ignorance*

Sage Vasistha said: O Kunda-Danta, it is a great delight that you are now established in *Brahman*. You have finally found supreme rest. The soul continues to wander through the world-process as long as it is overpowered by ignorance. In the state of enlightenment it realizes, "I am *Brahman*," and wanders no more.

It is *Brahman* that expresses in the form of a world of time and space. The mind, conditioned by ignorance, continues to experience the world of multiplicity—just as during dream there unfolds a world of time and space. However, on waking one realizes that his dream body as well as the dream world had no reality.

Like whirlpools arising out of a surging ocean, worlds arise out of *Brahman*. They are sustained by *Brahman* and subside in *Brahman*. And even when they appear to exist, they are in reality nothing but *Brahman*.

By taking recourse to enquiry, repeated effort, the sustained practice of serenity and purity of heart, the intellect becomes intuitive. Thereby one discovers, "I am *Brahman*." Like waking from a dream he realizes, "I am *Brahman*. All this is nothing but *Brahman*."

The soul is led to experience the dream of the world-process according to the karmas of the past. Seeds are sown by a farmer, but it is the sun that looks after their germination and growth. In the same way, karmas are attributed to each

soul, while all the fructifications of karmas are ordained by God.

As the individual soul comes closer to God, it discovers the power of *sat-samkalpa* (true resolve). By the will of God nothing is impossible. God leads the soul to amazing heights of glory.

It is the same *Brahman* that assumes the role of the *jiva* (individual soul) bound by karma, and also the role of *Ishwara* or God, Who ordains situations and circumstances that help the soul to experience the fruits of its karmas. However, when the Self is realized there is neither the *jiva* (individual soul) nor *Ishwara* (Cosmic Ruler). There is nothing but *Brahman*—the Absolute Self.

Section 190—*Questions and Answers to Bring Out the Essence of the Teachings*

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, bondage consists in the lapsing of knowledge into the realm of the knowables. When knowledge is freed of the knowables, it is liberation.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, how is knowledge freed of the knowables? How can a person intensify the knowledge of the cessation of the knowables in order to attain liberation?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, by the practice of serenity, self-control and other virtues, one attains the subtlety of intellect which negates the world-process. As the dream of delusion is gradually dispelled, one ascends the ladder of liberation.

Sri Rama: O Sage, what is the nature of the knowledge that brings about the negation of bondage and the fullness of freedom? (*The question brings out the contrast between the knowledge of Brahman and the knowledge of an object. While knowing an object, a person is involved in the triad of experience—knower, known and knowledge—but in knowing Brahman the triad disappears and he realizes, "I am Brahman," through intuitive intellect.*)

Sri Vasistha: The knowledge of *Brahman* is of the nature of Pure Consciousness, which is free of the knowables (the objects that are known through the mind and senses) in the three periods of time. By knowing this, a person attains the true knowledge of the Self (*Brahman*).

Sri Rama: O Sage, what is the nature of the knowables, which are distinct from the knowledge of *Brahman* (Pure Consciousness) and yet abide in It?

Sri Vasistha: Like air and its motion, there is no difference between the knowledge and the knowables. (Knowledge in its essence is Pure Consciousness. The knowables are illusory in nature, like snake-in-the rope. Just as the snake is the illusory modification of the rope, in the same manner, this world of objects is the illusory modification of *Brahman*. Therefore, *Brahman* is never affected by the world in the three periods of time.)

Sri Rama: If that is so, what constitutes the difference between the Self (knowledge) and the objects (the knowables)? How does this false world appear real—stretch-

ing as it does in the three periods of time—and thus become the basis for our experiences in daily life?

Sri Vasistha: It is due to delusion of the intellect that this false world appears to be real. (*Just as dream, though false, becomes the basis for one's apparent realities in the dream state, in the same way, this world, though false, has become the basis for the actions of one's daily life.*) For a thoughtful person all objects—internal and external—are false and non-existent.

Sri Rama: This world (consisting of “I,” “you,” and “others”) is proven to exist by means of valid proofs—such as direct perception, inference, and others. How am I to understand that it does not exist?

Sri Vasistha: Prior to creation, Virat (Cosmic Being) and other deities did not exist. This world has therefore evolved out of *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion) alone. Being of the nature of *Maya*, it is of the nature of appearance alone.

Sri Rama: O Sage, we experience this world in the three periods of time. How do you say that it is never created? How is it possible to negate this beginningless world-process that is constituted of countless objects by realizing *Brahman*?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, just as countless objects of dream dissolve when a person wakes up, in the same manner, this extensive world-process dissolves in the state of enlightenment.

Sri Rama: How do I understand that this world consisting of "I," "you," and "others" did not exist prior to creation?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, an effect arises out of a cause; it does not proceed from nothing. Since this world dissolves in *pralaya* (cosmic dissolution—which is the state prior to the next cycle of creation) there is nothing from which the world might arise.

Sri Rama: During *pralaya*, the imperishable *Brahman* alone exists. Why shouldn't *Brahman* become the cause of the creation of the world?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, an effect abides in the cause, and therefore arises from it (*the cause*). How can the world (*which does not abide in Brahman*) arise out of *Brahman*? (*In practical life, one sees oil proceeding from sesame seeds and not from desert sands. In order that an effect should arise from a cause, it must somehow abide in the cause.*) *Brahman* is Pure Consciousness; therefore, It does not contain the world even in its seed-state.

Sri Rama: Why shouldn't we adopt the view that the world abides in *Brahman* in a subtle state, and therefore evolves out of *Brahman* during creation?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, tell me, who is the experiencer of the existence of the world-seed in *Brahman*? What is the nature of his existence?

Sri Rama: *Brahman*, Which is of the nature of Pure Knowledge (Consciousness), is experienced by the sages. It is self-luminous. Nothing exists other than *Brahman*. Then, how does the world arise out of the void (*Maya*)?

Sri Vasistha: Therefore, O Rama, *Brahman* or Pure Consciousness alone exists. The three worlds are nothing but *Brahman*. How can the Self (*Brahman*) become subject to birth, death, and destruction?

Sri Rama: If this creation is not contained in *Brahman*, then whence has it arisen? Why do we perceive this illusory world?

Sri Vasistha: Since *Brahman* is devoid of causation, there is neither the absence nor the presence of creation in Him. This world that appears, the soul to whom it does seem real, and the form in which it appears—all these three are nothing but the Self.

Sri Rama: How does Pure Consciousness (*Brahman*), the Supreme Seer, lapse into the state of the inert "seen"—the world-process? It is paradoxical to think that fuel would burn fire. Similarly, it is paradoxical to assume that Pure Consciousness turns into matter and then functions through it?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, the Seer (Pure Consciousness) does not assume the form of the "seen" (the world of matter). This is so because the "seen" does not exist. The Seer alone exists as the Mass of Consciousness. Therefore, there is nothing paradoxical here.

Sri Rama: O Sage, in the beginning of creation the world is not perceived. Therefore, it is reasonable to hold that *Brahman* (Pure Consciousness) wills in order to create the world. Willing implies objectivity or externality. How is this possible when *Brahman* alone exists?

Sri Vasistha: Since there is absence of cause, this world of objectivity does not come to existence. This being so, it is proven that Pure Consciousness or *Brahman* is indescribable and absolutely free.

Sri Rama: If Pure Consciousness is ever free, how does I-ness, mine-ness and other limitations arise in It? If *Brahman* alone is, the very appearance of the ego-sense and other limitations would be impossible. Then there would be no need for spiritual teachers, scriptures and the teachings.

Sri Vasistha: Since there is non-existence of cause, the world never came to exist. Therefore, there is no reality in I-ness and other illusions. These illusions exist like snake-in-the-rope, or silver in the mother of pearl, or mirage in the desert.

Sri Rama: O Sage, *Brahman* is indescribable, devoid of externalization and movements, self-effulgent, eternally free, and immutable. If this is so, then for whom is this delusion?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, this delusion of the world-process has no existence. I, you, and all other multiplicities are in reality *Brahman* alone. (By the study of scriptures, when delusion is dispelled, a sage experiences the non-dual Self.)

Sri Rama: O Sage, I am still deluded; therefore, I do not know what other questions I should ask of you. I have not yet attained the fullness of knowledge. What am I to do?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, do continue to ask questions until all your doubts are dissolved and the truth of the Self is realized. When ignorance, which is the source of all doubts, is destroyed by intuitive knowledge, you will rest in *Brahman*.

Sri Rama: O Sage, I understand that the world does not exist since there was absence of cause prior to its creation. Yet who is subjected to this delusion of consciousness and matter? This I am unable to grasp.

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, you are unable to rest in *Brahman* because of lack of *abhyasa* (repeated affirmation of *Brahman*). As you dwell upon my teachings with repeated effort, your knowledge of the non-duality of *Brahman* will become steady. It is the unsteadiness of knowledge which gives rise to numerous doubts.

Sri Rama: Whence is this lack of *abhyasa*? How can there be *abhyasa* (repeated effort) when the delusion of the world has no reality?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, a liberated sage, seeing *Brahman* in all, continues to act in this world. Similarly, you should continue to practice *abhyasa* until *Brahman* is realized.

Sri Rama: O Sage, why do sages like you continue to teach us in various ways? They are perfect and enlightened;

the delusion of the world has dissolved for them. They have no need to perform any action.

Sri Vasistha: *Jivanmuktas* like me are ever established in the awareness that *Brahman* alone is. Our apparent actions do not cause distortion in our inner vision. In the Self, there is neither bondage nor release, nor are there means of attaining release.

Sri Rama: As long as the *chitta* (mind-stuff) exists, one cannot keep it withdrawn from the world for a long period of time. Therefore, the state of *nirvana* cannot be secured. Please tell me how to destroy the *chitta*?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, *Chit* (Pure Consciousness) is never transformed into *chitta* in reality. It is this knowledge that is the best means to destroy the *chitta*.

Sri Rama: The validity of the world is supported by the direct perception of oneself as well as of others. Then how can it be negated? If this world is utterly non-existent, then what is being experienced by all of us?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, the world that is perceived by the ignorant is not real. On the other hand, that which is perceived by the sages is nothing but *Brahman*. When the illusory world is negated by the removal of ignorance, one discovers *Brahman* as perceived by the sages.

Sri Rama: What is the world that is experienced by the ignorant? How is it unreal? And what is that which is

experienced by the enlightened, and why is that indescribable?

Sri Vasistha: The world that is experienced by the ignorant is confined to time, space and objectivity, but from the point of view of the sages such a world does not exist in the three periods of time.

Sri Rama: O Sage, how is this world being experienced when it did not exist prior to creation, was never created, and is of the nature of appearance alone?

Sri Vasistha: This waking world is as unreal as dream. In the dream world the objects seem to be real and practicable for the dreamer, and yet they are non-existent. In the same manner, the objects of the world, in spite of their unreality, continue to appear real for the ignorant.

Sri Rama: O Sage, during dream as well as in the fancies of the mind it is the impressions of the waking world which become the basis for one's experiences. This being so, why isn't the waking world real?

Sri Vasistha: If the dream world were sustained by the impressions of the waking world, the objects of dream would have been as real as the objects of the waking world. Then, if a house had fallen in dream, it should remain so, even on waking.

Sri Rama: I understand that the dream world is different from the waking world; and also that it is *Brahman* who

appears as the dream world. But how does this happen? How does *Brahman* manifest the dream world?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, dream and waking both are sustained by impressions of the *chitta*. The objects of dream may be similar to waking objects or they may be unique in nature—never seen before. Nevertheless, all objects in dream and waking are illusory. The objects that have been seen for the first time appear unique; when seen again and again they become ordinary. The impressions that are formed in the *chitta* on the basis of ignorance bring about the illusory projections of dream and waking. By constant affirmation of the reality of *Brahman*, these projections are negated.

Sri Rama: I have gained insight into the fact that the waking world is as illusory as dream, and yet why does this dream-like world continue to afflict me like a cruel *yaksha* (ghost)?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, tell me what is the cause of this dream of the world-process? The effect is never different from the cause. Therefore, try to enquire into the cause of this world.

Sri Rama: It is the *chitta* (mind-stuff) that is the cause of the dream. Therefore, the dream world is nothing but the mind. Similarly, this waking world is nothing but the mind.

Sri Vasistha: I have explained to you before that it is Consciousness that assumes the form of the *chitta* through its externalization. It is *Chit* (Consciousness) that is the reality in *chitta*. Thus, the world is nothing but the mind, and

the mind is nothing but *Chit* or Pure Consciousness. Waking, dream and sleep are appearances in Consciousness alone.

Sri Rama: A tree is non-different from its branches. In the same manner, *Brahman* is non-different from the *chitta*, and the *chitta* is non-different from this world. Why shouldn't we adopt this view?

Sri Vasistha: This is not possible. If you practice deep reflection you will realize that the world did not proceed from *Brahman*. This apparent world is nothing but *Brahman*—peaceful, unborn and indivisible.

Sri Rama: By your teachings I have understood that this world, consisting of the illusion of objects and their enjoyments, of birth and death, is mere appearance in *Brahman*.

Sri Vasistha: According to the ignorant, this world exists as real. By adopting subtle reasoning one understands the illusoriness of the world, and by intuitive vision one sees nothing but *Brahman*. The vision of the ignorant is to be negated by rational arguments as well as by the support of the intuitional experiences of the sages. And finally, even the rational vision is to be negated by intuitional realization.

Section 191: *The World is Non-existent for the Enlightened*

Sri Rama: O best among the sages, if that is so, this world is nothing but *Brahman* at all times. It does not arise from *Brahman*, nor does it merge in *Brahman*.

By exercising one's pure intellect, one finds this world illusory. And even this apparent world becomes non-existent when one attains intuitional realization of the Self.

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, you have understood rightly. It is due to indescribable ignorance that *Brahman* appears as the *jiva* (individual soul), and the *jiva*, in turn, through its distorted vision, sees *Brahman* in the form of the world-process.

Sri Rama: It is a great wonder that the Self shines on even in the absence of the world, when there is nothing to be illumined.

Sri Vasistha: It is indeed a great wonder. There is neither seer nor seen nor sight. It is the Light of Consciousness that assumes the form of the triad in dream, and it is the same Light that appears in the form of the triad of the waking state.

This world continues to be a great wonder for those who are ignorant. However, for us who are enlightened, the triad of the world is nothing but *Brahman*—or the very Self. The appearance of the triad is negated by our enlightened vision.

For us there is neither the waking state, nor the dream, nor the deep sleep. It is *Turiya* or the Transcendental Self that is the only reality. It is ignorance that has given rise to the illusion of the multiplicity of the world.

O Rama, until the Self is realized, one must maintain a stone-like firmness, and remain unaffected by the pleasures

of the senses. Even when tempted by the ignorant, one should not go after the *objects of the world*.

Section 192—Sri Rama Expresses His Understanding of Brahman

O Sage, it is a great wonder that owing to ignorance we have been trapped in this tiny world—a minute fragment of the vast cosmos for a long time.

When the Self is known, the illusion of the world disappears. This world along with its cause—ignorance—did not exist in the beginning, nor does it exist at present, nor will it ever exist in the future.

Brahman, Who is the embodiment of peace, Mass of Consciousness, infinite, indescribable, devoid of attachments, and non-dual—that *Brahman* alone exists.

Ignorance about *Brahman* has caused the appearance of the world-process. When *Brahman* is known, this world disappears from view.

It is not proper to seek the cause of ignorance. When ignorance is proven to be illusory, there is no need to look for its cause.

Like experiencing one's own death in dream, one experiences the triad of the world-process. When awakened by enquiry, one realizes the falsity of the world.

Bondage, which is sustained by lack of enquiry, is rooted out by the practice of enquiry. All this is nothing but

Brahman. It is Brahman who is appearing in Brahman. Brahman—the embodiment of bliss—abides in Brahman. Bliss surges over bliss.

The "I am" in us, having been purified by knowledge, shines as *Brahman*, Who is birthless, deathless, adored by all, changeless, all-pervading, self-effulgent and non-dual.

Section 193—*Sri Rama Describes His State of Enlightenment*

Sri Rama said: *Brahman*, Who is neither known by gods (who have attained the heavenly worlds by the force of their meritorious deeds) nor by *rishis* (those who have attained the higher worlds by the force of their austerities), appears in the form of this world. In fact, there is neither this world nor the phenomena of the objects.

What purpose can be served by pursuing the concepts of duality and non-duality, or by entertaining numerous doubts based on the various doctrines evolved by unenlightened minds?

These three worlds exist as castles in the air or a string of pearls seen in the open sky. They are nothing but the Ether of *Brahman*.

Like vacuity in space, solidity in stone, or liquidity in water, so is the world-process non-different from *Brahman*.

By the grace of guru, and by the pursuit of the teachings of the scriptures, the Self (Supreme *Brahman*) is realized.

This very world, which shines as real for the ignorant, becomes non-existent for the enlightened.

Though outwardly an enlightened sage seems to be as engrossed in action as the ignorant, yet he is endowed with the vision of non-duality. Just as a wave subsides in the ocean, so too, the erroneous vision of duality subsides in his enlightened mind.

The burning days of misery are over. The blessed night of liberation puts an end to the sorrows of the world, and the soul enjoys eternal rest.

Though apparently involved in birth, death, old age and manifold sufferings of the world, a sage is beyond them. He abides in that state where there is neither ignorance nor delusion; neither pain nor pleasure; neither joy nor sorrow. In that state, Pure *Brahman* alone exists.

O Sage, by your grace I have attained enlightenment. All my erroneous notions have subsided. Now the three worlds have become nothing but the Self—supremely peaceful, free of all diversities and dualities, like the vast sky bereft of the clouds of illusion.

With the blossoming of knowledge this world turns into *Brahman*. I was never different from what I am in the state of enlightenment. Before, I was ignorant of my nature, but now I am established in my very Self.

All my desires have dissolved. I have attained *nirvana*—extinction of the flame of craving. All my doubts have dissolved. I abide in the Self without the least distraction.

I am the infinite Self. I am all this, as well as the cessation of all this. Since I alone exist, I am ever untouched by the troubles of the world-process, which are mere appearances.

I have known that which is worth knowing. I have attained the bliss of liberation, which is beyond the reach of the ignorant. All the evils of the world have fled from my view. The Self has revealed itself, and death, duality and sufferings have vanished forever.

Section 194—*Sri Rama Continues to Describe His State of Enlightenment*

Sri Rama continued: O Sage, it is the Light of Consciousness, shining upon the thought-waves of numerous souls, which becomes refracted into the countless objects of enjoyment. In fact, it is the Self that enjoys Its own illusory creations by appearing as countless souls.

These countless worlds are superimposed upon *Brahman* all at the same time, and yet they remain distinct from each other, even like the rays of shining gems contained in a room.

Jivas having similar karmas and *vasanas* (subtle desires) come into contact with each other, while those that have dissimilar karmas and *vasanas* do not.

Though there may be a thousand lamps burning, yet they are not seen by those who are blind. In the same way, there are countless worlds that are not seen by many (who do not

have the type of karmas and *vasanas* suited for those worlds).

In every wave of the ocean there abides the saltish taste. In the same way, in every particle of creation there exists a world-process. At the same time, since these worlds are illusory in nature, *Brahman* alone exists.

The sun, sleeping during the misty morning, wakes up during midday as the mist dissolves. In the same way, the Self, veiled by ignorance, is as if in sleep. But when ignorance is removed by knowledge, It wakes up to discover Its essential glory.

O Sage, he who has attained enlightenment is ever established in the Self, which is of the nature of Pure Consciousness. He has nothing to accept or to reject.

Whether in *samadhi* (the state of absolute withdrawal from the objects of the world) or out of *samadhi*, he is ever established in the Self.

For an enlightened sage all this is nothing but the Ether of Pure Consciousness. There is nothing but supreme peace. It is this state of supreme peace that is the final goal of all beings.

The world-process is of the nature of boundless misery, while *nirvana* or liberation is of the nature of boundless bliss. It is the blissful *nirvana* alone that exists, and not the painful world-process.

The forms that are conceived by a sculptor in a marble rock exist in his mind without affecting the rock. In the same way, the world-process conceived in the minds of the ignorant exists in *Brahman* without affecting It.

In dream one may see the death of his friend or relative, but on waking he realizes that his dream is unreal. In the same manner, the objects that appeared real during the state of ignorance become unreal after enlightenment.

Seer, seen and sight—all these are nothing but the Absolute Self. When this truth is realized all illusions are destroyed.

O Sage, a person who has awakened from dream becomes dispassionate towards the dream objects. In the same manner, one who is enlightened develops dispassion towards all the objects of enjoyment.

Absence of craving gives rise to *bodha* (knowledge of the Self) and *bodha* in turn intensifies *vitriśna* (dispassion). Just as light illumines the wall, and the wall helps the light to be revealed, in the same manner, knowledge and dispassion illumine each other.

Knowledge, in order to be effective, must promote dispassion. If a learned man lacks dispassion, despite all his learning, he is actually a dull-wit.

When knowledge and dispassion reach their fullness, one experiences infinite bliss and absolute cessation of pain. *Trishna* (craving or passion) is bondage, and ignorance is the

source of it. When both (ignorance and craving) are destroyed, one attains liberation and goes beyond the sorrows of the world.

O Sage, that which is to be negated has been negated by me. That which is to be accomplished has been accomplished by me. That which is to be seen has been seen by me. All this is nothing but *Brahman*—the embodiment of auspiciousness, peace and bliss.

When mist in the winter season encounters the rays of the sun, it dissolves in the sky. In the same manner, the soul, having attained the knowledge of the Self, becomes one with *Brahman*. He who has attained the knowledge of the Self, whose mind is free of egoistic mentations, and who has risen above the *vasanas* (subtle desires) of the unconscious—such a sage moves in this world even like wind, untouched by the illusions of the world-process.

With the dissolution of *vasanas* there arises the glorious vision that all is *Brahman*. Then the supreme peace of liberation is revealed in the firmament of one's heart.

Section 196—*The Story of a Woodcutter and His Gem*

Sage Valmiki relates: Sri Rama became silent, immersed in the bliss of *Brahman*. Then coming back to normal consciousness, he continued to question Sage Vasistha for the sake of aspirants who were not yet liberated.

Sri Rama: O Sage, you are the dispeller of all doubts. Just as in winter the dark clouds disperse, even so, the clouds of doubts and delusions have dispersed in me, leaving the firmament of my heart clear as the cloudless sky.

There is, however, a small doubt in my mind. *Brahman* is beyond the waking, dream and deep sleep states. Therefore, It is inaccessible even with the help of guru as well as scriptures—which belong to the waking state only.

Please tell me whether the guru and scriptures are the cause of the rising of knowledge, or if they are not so.

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, the scriptures and guru are not the cause of knowledge. The reason for this is that the scriptures and the teachings of the guru abound with words and their meanings, while the Absolute Self is beyond them. In spite of this, the teachings enable an aspirant to attain Self-realization. I will relate to you a story that will illustrate this point.

Once upon a time there lived some woodcutters who, owing to their extreme poverty, lived a life of misery. In order to secure food for sustaining their lives, they decided to cut wood in a certain forest and earn livelihood by selling the wood.

They continued daily to go to the forest, cut wood and carry it to the town for sale. The money they received for selling the wood was just enough for the day-to-day needs.

However, the forest they frequented was full of precious woods. In addition, there were hidden hoards of treasures consisting of gold, gems and other precious stones under the trees.

Among the woodcutters, those who were exceedingly fortunate discovered the gold, gems, and precious stones. Some others found sandalwood trees, which made them rich. There were still others who began to sell special flowers and fruits and were thus freed of their poverty. But there were unfortunate ones who continued to cut ordinary wood, and they could not improve their condition.

In the course of time it so happened that these woodcutters discovered *chintamani* (the wish-yielding gem), and the gem bestowed upon them all they wanted. Thus, they began to live like gods. Those who were so miserable before now became free of the afflictions of poverty.

Section 197: The Explanation of the Parable

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, please explain to me the meaning of this parable so that I may understand fully the implications of the story.

Sri Vasistha replied: O Rama, all human beings are the woodcutters who suffer from poverty in the form of ignorance. The forest, which provides livelihood to them, is the world of guru and scriptures.

Some approach the scriptures for the sake of objects of enjoyment. When they obtain these objects, they develop faith in the scriptures. Consequently, they begin to practice various forms of spiritual disciplines (this is compared to discovering costly woods and precious minerals).

In the course of time they attain Self-realization, which is the *chintamani*—the wish-yielding jewel that fulfills all the desires of the heart.

Thus human beings are led to the scriptures for various reasons based upon their different *vasanas*. Some acquire *dharma* (virtue) only. Some attain *dharma* and *artha* (virtue and material wealth). There are others who acquire *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* (virtue, wealth and pleasure of the objects). There are, however, fortunate souls who attain all the four ends of life: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* (liberation). Liberation is the wish-yielding gem that secures the fulfillment of all desires.

Saintly men are those who are ever devoted to the good of others. People follow the example of these men, and thus begin to enter the realm of the scriptures. In the beginning they desire enjoyments, but in the course of time they attain liberation, wherein all desires are fulfilled.

The beauty of a woman excels all the adornments that she wears. In the same manner, the knowledge of the Self excels all the attainments of this world.

By reflecting upon the teachings of the scriptures the mind is purified and the intellect becomes dispassionate towards the objects of the world. The *chitta* (mind-stuff) begins to flow inwards until the Self is realized.

O Rama, by the study of this scripture (*Yoga Vasistha*), the *sattwa* portion of *avidya* (ignorance) is enhanced, and its *tamasic* portion is destroyed. This results in the unfoldment of intuitional intellect.

(Avidya is a blend of the three gunas, wherein sattwa is dominated by rajas and tamas. When sattwa is enhanced and tamas is removed, avidya turns into vidya or intuitive intellect, which leads to enlightenment.)

He who washes the impurities of his mind with the holy water of the scriptures becomes supremely purified by the attainment of Self-realization.

The sun casts its reflection on the ocean below. In the same manner, the Self casts its luminous reflection on the purified mind of the aspirant. Consequently, even without any special effort on the part of the aspirant, his ignorance is removed, and he attains the knowledge that transcends all the dualistic knowledge of the world.

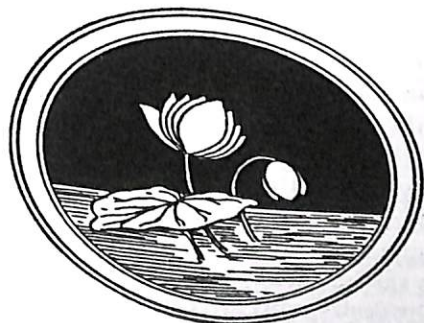
Children, while playing in water, rub pebbles against pebbles and unknowingly cause purification of their hands. In the same manner, by studying the scriptures, an aspirant allows the scriptural thoughts to rub against the worldly thoughts. Consequently, his *chitta* is purified and he attains enlightenment.

By churning sugar cane one extracts sugar. In the same manner, by studying and reflecting upon the scriptures, one attains the knowledge of the Self.

The pervasive light of the sun is spread in the sky, yet it reveals itself when it comes in conjunction with a mirror. In the same manner, the Light of the Self reveals itself when it comes into contact with the purified mind.

The scriptures that deal only with the three fruits (*dharma*, *artha* and *kama*) are worthless. It is a folly to listen to them. The true scriptures lead one to liberation (*moksha*). One must listen to the teachings of the scriptures for attaining knowledge.

Knowledge is that which promotes equanimity of mind and enables one to enjoy the peace that is similar to deep sleep even while he is awake. By the light of knowledge, all objects become mere appearances which do not mar the equanimity of the sage.



This form of knowledge or equanimity is possible only through the scriptures. Therefore, an aspirant must devote himself to the study of the scriptures with all diligence.

O Rama, *moksha* (liberation) excels all the glories of the earth and the heavens, including even the glory of Brahma Loka. It is of the nature of eternal bliss to become realized through the teachings of the spiritual preceptors.

Section 198: *Equanimity and Equal Vision*

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, I will relate to you some more secrets for the enhancement of spiritual knowledge. When a teaching is taught again and again it settles even in the mind of a dull-wit. What to speak of those who have purified minds?

Samata (equanimity of mind) is the quality that must be cultivated to the fullest measure. Rising beyond the virtues and vices of numerous souls, a sage perceives the same Self in all.

O Rama, all the glories of this world bow down before the sage who is endowed with equal vision.

Neither the possession of a vast empire, nor the finest enjoyment of the senses can yield the bliss that arises out of equanimity of the mind.

Equanimity of the mind is the blessed state in which the cessation of pleasure and pain, and other pairs of opposites, reaches its highest limit. It is the remover of the fever of doubts and the rain-cloud for quenching the fire of miseries.

Rare are the souls who are endowed with equanimity of

mind and are able to convert enemies into friends by their ideal conduct.

The magic wand of equanimity transforms the vices of anger and greed into the sublime virtues of forbearance and generosity. By its magic touch pain turns into bliss, and death into immortality.

Divine virtues such as friendliness, compassion, and cheerfulness attend on the sage even as a loving wife attends on her husband.

He who is balanced in mind while performing actions, whether for his own sake or for others, who is ever forgiving even towards those who have caused harm to him—such a sage is loved and adored by all living beings.

He who is intent upon doing good to all, who enjoys the bliss of equanimity—such a sage cannot be consumed by fire, nor can he be destroyed by water.

He who performs his duties with a mind free of pleasure and pain and is rooted in the vision of equality—who can equal such a sage?

A man of equanimity is trusted by his family and friends. Even his enemies develop confidence in him. In fact, whoever comes into contact with him begins to trust him.

Equanimity becomes fully established when a person attains Self-realization. Then he does not run away from adverse conditions, nor does he run after pleasant ones. Ever

contented with whatever comes to him as a result of his *prarabdha* (fructifying karma), he lives a life of enlightenment and is adored even by gods.

If such a sage were to entertain anger for the wellbeing of others, he would be adored because his anger acts like nectar and no one is hurt thereby.

Whatever he does, whatever he eats, whatever he says for refraining others from evil conduct—all his acts are praised by others.

Whatever actions a sage performs, whether good or evil (from the point of view of appearance), whether in the past or in the present—all are applauded by others.

Even when great calamities present themselves, a sage of equanimity is ever unaffected by them. King Shivi gave away his own flesh for saving a dove that had taken refuge in him. King Janaka remained unaffected when he learned that his well-decorated city, which was being prepared for a great celebration, had been burned to ashes.

King Kadarpana was not tempted by the charming *apsaras* because of the equanimity of his mind. Having renounced his kingdom, he abode in the inaccessible regions of the Vindhya Mountains, enjoying the bliss of the Self.

A sage who does not hurt anyone is neither attached to life nor to death. To his serene vision, life and death are the same. To him praise and insult are the same. Though ever

detached, he continues to perform actions for the wellbeing of the world.

**Section 199—A Sage Performs Actions for the
Wellbeing of the World**

Sri Rama: O Sage, why should a wise and liberated sage perform actions when he is immersed in the knowledge of the Self and enjoys infinite bliss within himself?

Sri Vasistha: O Rama, there is nothing **desirable or** undesirable for a sage. Therefore, it is all the same to him whether he performs action or remains inactive.

There is nothing in this world that is either desirable or undesirable for a sage. With his intuitive vision he beholds *Brahman* as the only reality.

O Rama, as long as this body lasts it engages itself in action according to *prarabdha* (fructifying karmas of the past). A sage performs these actions unhesitatingly because he is neither concerned with accepting them nor rejecting them.

Even though a sage is beyond the restrictions of good and evil actions, he conducts himself in accordance with the scriptures. Why should he perform those actions that are prohibited by the scriptures when he can perform the righteous actions that are most natural to his personality?

Whatever action is performed with a serene mind and an enlightened intellect is ever faultless, because such actions do not create karmic entanglements for the sage.

In this world, there are enlightened sages from different castes and orders of society. Accordingly they conduct themselves differently, and yet they are ever liberated. There are royal sages such as King Janaka who rule kingdoms and yet they are ever detached from the world.

There are sages among *brahmins*, among *kshatriyas*, and among other castes. They perform their different duties. An enlightened *brahmin* performs duties such as conducting worship of gods and studying and disseminating the teachings of the scriptures. Similarly, a *kshatriya* engages himself in promoting rule and order in society. In the same manner, sages from other castes perform their different duties.

There are some sages who abide in forests, far away from human associations, where they practice intense meditation and live with the deer and other animals of the forest.

There are other sages who live in holy places or in the *ashrams* of great souls where they devote themselves to the study of scriptures, meditation on the Self, and dissemination of spiritual teachings.

Some sages renounce their homelands and live in foreign lands, while others roam from one forest to another, or from one city to another, or from one place to another. (*These differences in conduct are caused by their different prarabdha karmas*).

NIRVANA PRAKARANA

Some, having attained enlightenment, enter into *sanyasa* order (for example, Sage Yajnavalkya, who renounced his household life for upholding the tradition of *sanyasa*). Some attain enlightenment in *brahmacharya ashram* (celibate stage of life).

Some sages have renounced their homes. Some abide in one place, while others continue to move from one place to another.

There are others who, without attaining enlightenment, have developed the false notion that they are enlightened. Led by delusion they perform prohibited actions and fall from the path that leads to liberation.

Neither abiding in the forest nor living at home can lead one to liberation. Neither performance of actions nor their abandonment is the cause of enlightenment. It is the knowledge of the Self alone that confers liberation on a person.

He whose mind dwells upon the objects of the world is immersed in the world-process, even if he does not perform actions—whether good or evil.

The mind that delights in the taste of sense enjoyments is like a bee on a honey jar. It cannot be driven away easily, nor can it be killed (because by doing so, the jar will be broken). However, it is by wisdom that the mind can be turned away from the objects of the world.

Led by good karmas of the past, one becomes inclined to *satsanga* (good association), develops the qualifications

for attaining liberation, and practices listening, reflection and meditation on the Self. Finally one attains the realization, "I am *Brahman*," and becomes free of the world-process.

O Rama, may you abide as an enlightened sage in whom the sun of wisdom has dawned, the darkness of defect (attachment, hate and others) has vanished, and the firmament of the heart has become free of the clouds of doubt and delusion.

Sri Valmiki relates: At this stage, Sri Rama as well as all the listeners in the assembly hall of King Dasharatha became still—they became immersed in *samadhi*. Seeing this, Sri Vasistha ceased from speaking, and the black bee of his mind began to enjoy the nectar of bliss in the lotus of the heart.

Section 200—*Siddhas Praise Sage Vasistha*

Sri Valmiki said: O Bharadwaja, when Sri Vasistha concluded his teachings pertaining to *nirvana*, there arose a great clamor as the *siddhas* and celestial beings began to shower their praises on Sage Vasistha.

In addition, the celestial beings sounded their trumpets, and the mingled sounds echoed with the surrounding mountains. Gods showered flowers from all directions, and everywhere the flowers fell like snowflakes from the sky.

The assembly hall was covered with flowers, the mountains resounded with the sound of heavenly trumpets, drums

and other musical instruments, and the pollen from the flowers had covered the face of the sky. The very atmosphere was laden with heavenly fragrance.

Not only the listeners from the assembly hall, but even the birds and beasts lifted their heads with a deep sense of awe. With the ceaseless shower of flowers and the eloquent expressions of praise, the earth and the heavens created a wondrous sight.

It appeared as if the ocean of festivity began to surge with the tossing waves of joy. With the quieting down of the commotion, the words of *siddhas* became audible.

The *siddhas* said: We have lectured on spiritual teachings a thousand times in the midst of eager aspirants. Also we have heard the teachings of many other teachers, but never have we come across teachings similar to those given by Sage Vasistha to Rama.

The sage has expounded the nature of *Brahman* with the help of parables, illustrations, arguments, and all possible methods. His intense love for Rama is beyond compare.

By listening to his teachings, even animals and birds have become free of all miseries—what to speak of human beings! Having feasted upon his nectarine words through our ears, we have enjoyed a rare fortune in our lives.

The people of Ayodhya heard these words of the heavenly *siddhas* with their eyes turned towards the heavens, and as they looked below, they beheld the assembly hall of King Dasharatha covered with celestial flowers.

Having witnessed such a wondrous sight, they worshipped Sage Vasistha by offering flowers at his feet. When the clamor of applause calmed down to a certain extent, King Dasharatha prostrated before the sage and worshipped him with flowers.

King Dasharatha said: O Sage, having listened to your wondrous teachings, I have attained the immutable wisdom of the Self, and I experience the fullness of joy within my heart.

There is nothing in the three worlds that can equal the wisdom you have imparted to us. However, as a token of my devotion, please accept what I am going to offer to you.

I offer to you my entire kingdom along with all my possessions. In addition, I offer to your lotus feet myself and all my sons and relatives as your slaves. Now do as you please.

Sri Vasistha said: O King, we *brahmins* are pleased with mere adorations. You know how to rule the kingdom. Kingship befits you. Therefore, let all this stay with you.

King Dasharatha said: O Sage, this kingdom is nothing compared to the bliss of *Brahman*. It is with great hesitation that I dared to offer this at your feet. However, please do as you wish.

Sri Valmiki relates: When the king ceased from speaking, Sri Rama stood up with flowers in his hands and spoke.

Sri Rama said: O Sage, I have nothing else to offer you other than my profound adorations, which I offer at your lotus feet.

Thus saying, Sri Rama bowed his head at the feet of Sri Vasistha and scattered the flowers at his holy feet, even as trees offer their dewdrops at the base of a mountain.

His face bathed in tears of joy, Sri Rama worshipped his preceptor again and again. Shatrughna, Lakshmana and other princes followed the example of Rama by offering their adorations to the holy feet of the sage.

This was followed by the offering of flowers and adorations from numerous kings, *brahmins*, sages and others who were present in the royal assembly of King Dasharatha.

Sri Vasistha, revealing his face from the midst of flowers, even as the sun would reveal itself from the midst of clouds, spoke to Vishwamitra and other sages.

Sri Vasistha said: O Vishwamitra, the most glorious blossom from the family of Gadhi; O Vamadeva, O Nimi, O Kratu, O Bharadwaja, O Pulastya, O Atri, O Narada, O Shandili, O sages of the assembly! All of you have heard my exposition of spiritual philosophy. If there has been any defect in my teachings please be kind enough to let me know.

The assembled sages said: O Great *Brahmin*, there have not been any defects in your teachings. As fire purifies gold, your words have purified our souls.

As the lotus unfolds by the rays of the moon, the lotus of our heart has blossomed by the nectarine words of wisdom from your lips.

Sri Valmiki narrates: Having spoken words of praise, the sages covered Sage Vasistha with flowers. Then they praised King Dasharatha and adored Lord Vishnu in the form of Rama and his brothers.

The heaven and earth were filled with words of praise for the Sage.

Section 201—*Sri Rama Describes His Blissful Experience*

Sage Valmiki narrates: The next day the listeners gathered again in the assembly hall of King Dasharatha. Reflecting upon the teachings of the previous day, their faces were beaming with joy. After offering their adorations to the sage, they occupied their respective seats. The king, as well as Rama and other princes, also prepared themselves to listen to the nectarine words of the sage.

Sri Vasistha said: O Rama, you are the moon in the firmament of the Raghu's race. What else would you like to hear? What is your experience now?

Sri Rama said: O Sage, by your grace, I have become like the moon in the cloudless sky. The sufferings of the world have ceased. The knots of my heart have been rent asunder. All my limitations have dissolved. My intellect, purified by

the knowledge of *Brahman*, shines like a crystal in the temple of purity.

My mind is enjoying profound contentment. It is no longer desirous of listening to more teachings or interested in the performance of actions. It enjoys the peace of deep sleep.

My mind is no longer involved in the memories of the past. It has no longings for the pleasures of the objects. All its desires have dissolved.

Devoid of the thoughts of objects, freed of the desires of the mind, I am as if in deep sleep at all times. I have attained the fullness of *nirvana* (liberation).

I laugh at my previous desires, which were founded upon my identification with the physical body. Your radiant teachings have removed the illusions that assailed my mind.

Now I have no need for instructions or scriptures or relatives, nor have I any need to renounce them.

Although perceiving the world with my senses, I am fully established in the conviction that this world is an appearance only. It is nothing but the Ether of Consciousness.

I am content with things as they are, with duties as they present themselves to me, and with events as they develop in my life.

When there is a desirable development, my inner contentment is unruffled; and also when there is an undesirable development, my inner peace remains unaffected. Though performing my duties as enjoined by the scriptures, I am established in the non-duality of the Self. My illusions have gone.

Whether this creation itself is overturned, or the winds of destruction begin to blow with all their fury, or the world turns into a barren desert, I remain ever unaffected, ever established in the Self.

O Sage, I am delighting in the Self; I am beyond the reach of the senses and the mind, diseaseless, free of the fetters of desires. Just as space cannot be grasped in one's fist, I cannot be grasped or fettered by the world.

Fragrance arising out of a flower diffuses in the sky, transcending the flower. In the same manner, the vision of the Self arising out of the body has transcended the body and all its limitations.

Kings, whether enlightened or not, roam in their kingdoms, joyously performing their various duties. In the same manner, I, being established in the Self, roam everywhere fearlessly, untouched by joy, sorrow and desire. (*However, the sovereignty experienced by unenlightened kings is of a shallow nature.*)

I am delighting in the bliss of *Brahman*, which transcends all the joys of the world. I no longer desire the

pleasures of the senses. From an external point of view, I live as a human being, and I am ready to do whatever you ask me to do.

Though established in the Self, I will continue to perform my duties in daily life in the spirit of a child's play, as long as my body lasts.

Established in the Self, I eat, drink, sit, and perform my duties. By your grace all my doubts have dissolved.

Sri Vasistha said: O Rama, it is a matter of great joy that you have attained the supreme state of liberation that is devoid of beginning, middle and end. Having attained this, one goes beyond all sorrows.

It is a matter of great fortune that you have brought about the cessation of all miseries of life, and all your doubts related to this world and the next have been dissolved.

O beloved son, by attaining enlightenment, you have elevated the line of Raghus, causing spiritual upliftment for the past, present and future generations of the line of Raghus.

Section 202—*Joyousness of the Kings as Well as of Rama*

Sri Valmiki narrates: O Bharadwaja, hearing these words of Sage Vasistha, all the kings and others experienced immense peace, as if they had been nourished by nectar.

Sages such as Vamadeva and others praised Vasistha for his excellent teachings. Rama, the other princes, and the king all were enjoying the bliss of the Self. When the words of praises subsided, Sri Rama spoke to Sage Vasistha.

Sri Rama said: O Sage, you are the lord of the past and the present. Just as fire purifies gold, in the same manner, you have purified my intellect by ridding it of ignorance.

O Lord, before I was rooted in the notion, "I am the body." Now by your grace, I have realized, "I am the Self of all."

I am established in the fullness of experience. I have become free of the disease of the world-process. All my doubts have been dispelled. I have been awakened to my essential nature.

I have attained bliss which is never followed by misery. The sun of wisdom, which knows no setting, has risen in me.

How wonderful! The lotus of my heart has bloomed to its fullness, nourished by your nectarine words of wisdom. By your grace I have become the emperor of the Divine realm, and consequently this whole world has become nectar for me.

My intellect is infused with bliss. All my sorrows have disappeared. Endowed with heavenly peace, I am enjoying the taintless bliss of the Self. Having examined the true nature of my own self, I have rendered it pure by discovering its innate purity. Adorations to the Self in me!

*Section 203—Description of the
Enlightenment of Rama*

Sri Valmiki narrates: While Sri Rama was describing his inner experience, the sun began to decline and Sri Vasistha declared the termination of the spiritual talks for that day.

Then the assembly dispersed, and the king rose along with Sri Vasistha, Rama, other princes, kings, sages, nobles and all those who were present. On rising from their seats they greeted each other, took their leave, and departed for their respective abodes. Rama and others passed the night reflecting upon the blissful Self.

The sun rose, sweeping the stars off the blue sky. Then the king, princes, nobles, sages and others gathered again before Sage Vasistha in the assembly hall of King Dasharatha.

When all the assembled people took their respective seats, Sri Rama spoke in the following manner.

Sri Rama said: O knower of the secret of all *dharmas* (the scriptures), you are the ocean of knowledge, you are the sharp axe that destroys the trees of illusion. Now, please tell me what more should I know.

Sri Vasistha said: O Rama, you have attained enlightenment. There is nothing more that remains to be known by you. Your intellect has attained its highest fulfillment. You have attained all that is to be attained.

By your own reflection, let me know what more you need to hear.

Sri Rama said: O Sage, it is exactly as you have spoken. My intellect is profoundly fulfilled. I have attained *nirvana* (the cessation of all cravings). I am established in the fullness of peace. There is nothing more that I desire to attain.

What was to be said, you have spoken. What was to be known, I have known. What was to be performed, I have performed. Now let your speech rest.

The whole world has become converted into the homogeneity of the Self. The duality (awareness of difference between *jiva* and *Brahman*) has dissolved. The illusion of the world-process has been negated. I am established in *Brahman*—the mass of Consciousness.

Section 204—*Wiping Out the Illusion of the World-process*

Sri Vasistha said: Listen to me again, O Rama. I will give you a summary of spiritual teachings. Just as a mirror is wiped clean again and again, in the same way, my teachings will serve the purpose of cleaning the mirror of your mind.

This illusion of the world-process is constituted of name and form. When one of the two is negated, the other is negated automatically. Names, devoid of the forms associated with them, become meaningless.

This waking state is false, and a dream is nothing but an illusory projection based upon the waking state. Therefore,

dream and waking both are false. There is nothing other than Pure Consciousness.

In spite of its form, a dream is in reality formless. In the same way, the three worlds, in spite of their apparent forms, are the formless Self alone.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, how did the earth arise out of Pure Consciousness? How did the mountains, the water, the stone, the fire, activities, time, air, and others arise out of Pure Consciousness? Though I have attained enlightenment, I ask these questions for the intensification of knowledge.

Sage Vasistha: Tell me, O Rama, how do these arise out of Pure Consciousness? You are already in possession of this knowledge.

Sri Rama: O Sage, this world is like a dream. The earth, the mountains, the water, and all the objects of the world are mere appearances. The Ether of the Self alone exists, devoid of all names and forms.

It is Consciousness that appears as the earth, the sky, time and space, and all the multiplicities of this world.

Being nothing but water, the ocean is devoid of the multiplicity of waves, whirlpools, and foam. In the same way, Pure Consciousness, though manifesting as names and forms, is devoid of all multiplicities.

It is Consciousness which, without losing Its transcen-

dental nature, experiences Itself as a stone, or ether, or water, or wind or fire.

This world, comprising "I," "you," "this," and "that," is nothing but Pure Consciousness or *Brahman*. One sees in dream a mountain on fire, though such a mountain does not exist. In the same way, one sees this world, but it is illusory. Therefore, Consciousness alone exists.

Mind, intellect, ego, the five elements, the mountains and the directions—all these in reality abide as if in the womb of a rock. In fact they are expressions of indescribable illusion.

Viewed with an enlightened intellect, this world is nothing but *Brahman*. But seen through the unenlightened intellect, it continues to be a world of multiplicity.

Section 205—*The World Is Non-existent Like a Dream*

Sri Rama said: O Sage, dream does not exist. And since this waking world is as false as dream, it follows that it does not exist in the three periods of time.

O Sage, there is no doubt in the fact that dream does not exist. And since this world of our waking state is similar to dream, it has no existence. But then, how does Consciousness allow itself to assume the role of body (how can there arise the illusory modification in *Brahman*)?

Sri Vasistha replied: O Rama, just as dream is sustained by the Ether of Consciousness, in the same way, the waking state also is sustained by the same Ether of Consciousness. Dream and waking are non-existent, while the Ether of Consciousness alone exists.

Dream is subtle, while waking is gross; but in reality both are illusory modifications of Consciousness. Numerous world-systems are nothing but Pure Consciousness.

O Rama, it is immaterial to enquire into the number of world-systems that arise out of Consciousness. What is important to know is that all this creation is nothing but Consciousness.

The greater truth is the fact that *Brahman* did not undergo any modification. There is neither beginning, nor middle, nor end in *Brahman*. There is neither time nor space in *Brahman*.

There are neither mountains, nor oceans, nor even the sky. All this is Pure Consciousness alone.

In dream one sees a rock where there is no rock, one sees space where there is no space. In the same way, one sees the objects of the world where there is nothing but *Brahman* alone.

Just as water alone surges in the ocean, in the same way, *Brahman* alone exists in *Brahman*. All this is nothing but *Brahman*—peaceful, formless, taintless Pure Conscious-

ness. There is neither existence nor non-existence of the world.

Section 206—*The Story of King Prajnapti*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, how did the Pure Ether of Consciousness become converted into this universe? How far does this universe extend, and how long will it continue to exist?

Sri Vasistha replied: This universe appears without any cause. Therefore, its appearance is illusory. In fact, *Brahman* alone exists as the only reality.

O Rama, once upon a time there lived a great king, Prajnapti, who was the ruler of the city of Ilawati, which is located in Kusha Dwipa. Because of his excellent qualities, he was immensely loved by his subjects. He was like a second Indra on this earth.

One day led by some purpose, coursing through the sky by my yogic power, I descended in the royal court of the king, even like a falling sun. The king worshipped me by offering flowers, water and other sacred materials, and then seated by my side he asked great questions.

King Prajnapti asked: O Sage, during the dissolution of the world nothing remains. What then is the material cause of the next creation? What are the instrumental causes, and whence did these causes arise?

What is the true nature of this world? What is the nature of the modifications that operate from the beginning of creation to the end of it? What has caused differences among different worlds?

Who is the creator or seer of all this? Is Consciousness the cause of body, mind, senses and others? If that were so, is Consciousness eternal or perishable? If it is eternal, it would be impossible for it to be subjected to modifications. If it is perishable, then it must have a cause. What is that cause that has given rise to Consciousness? If you say that Consciousness gives rise to Consciousness, then this would lead to the fallacy of unending series.

When a person dies, a body arises in the astral world for experiencing the fruits of his karmas. What is the material cause of that body, and what is the efficient cause? It would be impossible for *dharma* (virtue) or *adharma* (vice), which are formless, to give rise to a body with form.

(Note: In the example of an earthen pot, the earth is the material cause of the pot and the potter is the efficient cause. The yoga system of Patanjali Maharshi believes that Prakriti or Nature is the material cause of the world, while God or Ishwara is the efficient cause. However, according to Vedanta, since the world is a mere appearance, Brahman is the material as well as efficient cause of this illusory world.)

If you say that a person ceases to be after his death, you would be adopting the view of the materialists. How are we then to explain the formation of the body after death?

It is seen that gods, sages and saints have the power of transforming iron or stone into gold. How does this happen?

Different scriptures hold different views. Some say that non-existence was prior to creation. Others say that existence was prior to creation. Yet some others say that there was neither existence, nor non-existence prior to creation? How are we to reconcile these contradictory views?

If Brahma arose out of *akasha* (ether), why does He not arise from *akasha* everywhere? Why do the seeds of herbs and trees give rise to the same herbs and trees? Why is fire hot and ice cold?

Suppose a person has both a friend and a foe. The friend offers his own life in Prayag (an important pilgrimage center) for the sake of prolonging the life of the person. And the enemy offers his own life for the destruction of the person. How will these two contradictory wishes be fulfilled?

Suppose there are many *upasakas* (practitioners of meditation) who practice meditation. Each of them has the will, "May I become the moon god." How will it be possible for so many moon gods to exist at the same time?

Suppose a thousand persons desire the same lady, and each of them practices meditation to acquire her as his wife. As a result of that meditation, how will it be possible for all of them to have the same lady? And suppose that lady has practiced austerity with the *samkalpa* (resolve) of being established in *brahmacharya*? What will happen then?

O Sage, suppose someone receives a boon that his spirit will not go outside of his own room at the time of his death and at the same time he would be the ruler of the seven continents for a long period of time. How can these two contradictory things happen?

Where does *adrishta* (the unseen karma) abide—that which gives rise to the future experiences of pleasure and pain? If it were to abide with the person, then since the person is no more after death, who is there to experience the fruits of karma?

O Sage, give me instructions pertaining to *Brahman* which destroy all doubts, and the knowledge of which overcomes all the contradictions of this world as well as the next.

Section 207—Answers to the Questions of King Prajnapti

Sri Vasistha said: O King, I will explain to you the nature of the Self, knowing which all your doubts will be dispelled.

The objects of this world are unreal as well as real at all times. The terms, “unreal” and “real” are relative. What is unreal for one may be real for another. However, Pure Consciousness is the underlying truth behind both.

Prior to creation there was absence of all causes. It is Pure Consciousness that manifests as the world without any cause. This being so, this world is merely an appearance, like a dream.

According to the scriptures, as well as our (referring to the experience of the sages) own experience, *Brahman* alone exists as the Absolute Reality. There is nothing other than *Brahman*.

All those who believe that this world is different from Consciousness are like frogs in a dark well. Those who consider matter as the cause of Consciousness are dull-witted and not fit for receiving the knowledge of *Vedanta*.

Those who study the *Vedas* under the guidance of guru attain spiritual knowledge, which dispels all doubts.

If a dull aspirant were to ask, "If all this is Consciousness, why don't we see consciousness in a dead body?" We reply that just as the dream world arises in your own mind, in the same manner, this world arises in Brahma's mind. And though all beings and objects in dream are nothing but consciousness, living beings seem to have consciousness in them, while the inert beings appear unconscious. In the same manner, all objects, living and inert, are nothing but Pure Consciousness.

Just as the waking world is not related to the dream world, in the same manner, the world (astral worlds) experienced after death is not related to the world experienced during one's life.

Just as time and space of the waking world do not apply to the dream world, in the same way, the realities of this world do not apply to the astral worlds that are experienced after one's death.

Though perceived as reality to the unenlightened, this world is a mere appearance for the enlightened sages. It is nothing but the Ether of Pure Consciousness.

This world, as well as the world after death, is false, and yet they both continue to appear real for the unenlightened. The Ether of Consciousness, which appears as the world containing the earth, the sky, the mountains, etc., continues to appear in a similar (or dissimilar) fashion according to one's karmas after one's apparent death.

Wandering in the realms of delusion the soul feels, "Here I died. Then, I was taken to Yama Loka. I have been sent to heaven or hell according to my virtuous or sinful karmas."

Ignoring the teachings of the scriptures, those who do not ~~practice~~ listening, reflection and meditation continue to be ~~deluded~~, but those who resort to these practices attain enlightenment.

Tinged with *vasanas*, the consciousness of the unenlightened creates the illusion of this world as well as the worlds after death. The world is nothing but *Brahman* for the enlightened sages. Therefore, it is the source of all that is auspicious and blissful. On the other hand, for the unenlightened, this world is real. Therefore, it is the source of limitless miseries, sorrows and afflictions.

Section 208—*Karmas Fructify at Different Times and Places*

Sri Vasistha continued: By the orders of a king, people receive reward or punishment even while they are at a distance. In the same manner, by the will of the creator, people receive the fruits of their karmas at different places and times.

It is through the veil of ignorance that *Brahman* is viewed as the world-process; and when the veil is lifted by knowledge, the world is seen as *Brahman* alone.

Whatever one fancies, one sees in his imagination. So too, whatever *Brahman* wills comes to pass in the realm of *Maya*.

When sages acquire the power of giving curses and boons, they do so because of the will of *Brahman* that operates through them.

O King, this world becomes real to the ignorant by the will of *Brahman*. Also, this world becomes illusory for the enlightened by that will.

King Prajnapti asked: O Sage, if this world appears due to the will of *Brahman*, then why doesn't it appear during *pralaya* (cosmic deluge) as well as in deep sleep?

Sage Vasistha: This too is according to the will of *Brahman*. It is by that will that the world appears during the waking state (and dream state) as well as during creation, and disappears in sleep as well as in *pralaya*.

Objects of your fancy arise, stay for a certain duration, and disappear in your mind. In the same manner, all names and forms arise from *Brahman*, stay for a while sustained by *Brahman*, and disappear in *Brahman*.

Therefore, all these three worlds are in reality *Brahman* alone. Since *Brahman* Himself appears as the world, His will is indomitable; whatever He wills comes to pass. It is by His will that *jivas* enjoy the fruits of their karmas in different places and times. In fact, all these places and times are as illusory as the places and times of one's dream.

It is by the *samkalpa* (will) of *Brahman* that diamonds shine, and mantras and medicines are effective in remedying afflictions and diseases.

The will of *Brahman* sustains all the laws that operate in the realms of human affairs. It is that will which permits an individual to perform his self-effort to bring about the cessation of the world-process.

Viewed from the enlightened mind, all these—the real and unreal objects of the world—are nothing but *Brahman*. Who is without beginning, middle and end.

Section 209—Contradictions Related to Karma Reconciled

Sage Vasistha: You have asked what will happen to a person when his friend has offered prayers for his upliftment, while his enemy has offered prayers for his downfall—and

both have done so in a sacred place that is said to confer upon the devotees whatever they desire.

O King, the prayers offered in a sacred place bring their results in an infallible manner. This is in accordance with the will of the creator.

The power of a sacred place nullifies the sinful karma of the devotee either partially or completely. If the devotee, however, is endowed with virtue and vice in equal proportion, he must experience the fruits of both through two different embodiments.

Based on the karma of the individual, there arises a dream-like experience at the time of death. The departing soul feels, "I am dead. My relatives are still alive. They are weeping for me."

The experiences of his relatives are likewise of the nature of a dream. They grieve, weep, and experience sorrow at his death. They feel that they have taken the dead body to the cremation ground, and then they cremate the body.

The experiences of an individual and those of his relatives are of the nature of projections of the mind. Therefore, when virtuous karma predominates, the departed soul feels as if it has been blessed by the prayers of others, and its relatives also have a similar experience of having offered prayers for the departed soul.

O King, this world is a projection of Brahma's mind. There is nothing that cannot become a "reality" or an

"unreality" in this dream-like world of Brahma. In a dream city, the one consciousness of an individual assumes millions of names and forms. In the same manner, it is one Consciousness that has assumed numerous forms in this waking world. In reality, this world is nothing but *Brahman*, the Absolute.

Section 210—*Brahman Becomes All through the Power of Illusion*

Sri Vasistha continued: O King, if a meditator were to meditate with the will, "May I become the deity of the moon," he will become that deity. Thousands of meditators may each discover themselves as that deity, and yet the sky will not be overcast by thousands of moons.

In the story of Lila, the soul of King Padma discovered a world even in the corner of a room, and that emergent world did not contradict the world that was already there. In the same way, numerous souls may experience numerous worlds as a result of their *samkalpas* (mental will), and yet these worlds do not interfere with each other. (*People sleeping in the same hall may have different dreams, yet their dream worlds do not interfere with each other.*)

Virtuous acts (such as charity or kindness) that are performed in this world give rise to their different fruits in the astral planes. These fruits are nothing but illusory modifications of Consciousness brought about by the *samkalpas* of the mind.

It is Consciousness that assumes the form of hellish worlds or heavenly worlds according to one's sinful or virtuous karmas. It is Consciousness or *Brahman* that becomes all that is experienced in the realm of multiplicity.

The king asked: O Sage, in the beginning there was nothing but Consciousness, Which is formless. How did Consciousness imagine the body in Itself? Further, how can Consciousness express Itself without the body? Just as a wall reveals the luminosity of a lamp, so too, the body reveals the luminosity of Consciousness. Body and Consciousness seem to be interdependent like wall and lamp.

Sri Vasistha replied: According to the enlightened sages, the idea that Consciousness depends upon the body is as ridiculous as the statement, "The stones are dancing in the air." The body is nothing but *Brahman*.

Like the dream body, the waking body is an illusory modification of Consciousness. The illustration of dream is given because everyone experiences it. Sages use the language of the ignorant in order to enlighten them.

In *Brahman* there is neither the waking state, nor the dream state, nor the sleep state, nor anything of this world of multiplicity. Beyond the reach of body and mind, *Brahman* alone is the transcendental reality, self-effulgent, the goal of self-effort, of the nature of Pure Consciousness.

What was in the beginning, the same continues to exist even today. *Brahman* alone was and is the only reality. All notions of duality and non-duality are nothing but *Brahman*.

From the fullness of *Brahman*, fullness alone has proceeded. In the fullness of *Brahman* alone exists this world, which is in reality *Brahman*.

If one were to meditate upon an object with one-pointed focus for a considerable period of time, he will attain that object because nothing is impossible in this world of illusion. However, one must direct one's mind towards *Brahman*—the reality behind all the illusory names and forms.

O King, follow the path of Self-realization. Become peaceful in your mind, healthy in your body, and dispassionate in your senses, and thus move on to the highest blessedness.

**Sections 211 and 212—*This World Is
Nothing but Brahman***

Sri Vasistha said: Having fulfilled the wishes of King Prajnapti, and having been worshipped by him, I coursed through the sky to reach the heavenly world.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, how do we see the worlds of *siddhas*, *saddhyas*, Yama, Brahma, *vidyadharas* and *devas*? And also how do we see the dwellers therein?

Sri Vasistha explained: O Rama, by adopting the technique of special *dharanas* (concentration, meditation and *samadhi*), you may behold these worlds of the *siddhas* and others at any time, whether during the day or in the night, as well as at any place—above or below, in front or behind. Those worlds are mental creations, and so too is our world.

Brahman, Who is formless, immutable, of the nature of Pure Consciousness, the embodiment of peace—that *Brahman* alone exists. The *siddhas*, by their mental will, have given rise to their different worlds as illusory projections on *Brahman*. In fact, everyone discovers a world according to his mental conviction. The worlds of the celestial beings appear void for human beings, while the worlds of human beings are void for the celestial beings.

Just as the dream world of a dreaming person appears void for another who is awake, even so, the world that is experienced by one type of being appears void for another type of being.

One may experience one's own death in a dream, and yet that dream world is non-existent. In the same manner, the world in the waking state is illusory and unreal.

Pure Consciousness illumines the dream world without being affected by it. In the same manner, Pure Consciousness continues to illumine the world of the waking state without being affected by it.

Hiranyagarbha or the creator (Cosmic Mind) arises in *Brahman* even like a wave in the ocean. Since the very creator is nothing but Pure Consciousness, all that is created is also of the same nature.

Manifesting in the form of creation and dissolution of the universe, *Brahman* alone exists everywhere and at all times. In the state of ignorance, there exist numerous worlds—

known and unknown. But in the state of knowledge all this is void—*Brahman* alone exists.

O Rama, speaking from a relative point of view, first there arises the ego-sense in *Brahman* (like an illusory projection). Next, the ether element is superimposed on the ego-sense. Following this, there arises the illusion of time and space, and consequently the illusion of countless worlds.

Deluded by ignorance, the soul in the individual develops the notion, "I am this body. I am absent in objects that are other than the body." Thus it creates the illusion of being confined to a certain space. In the same manner, it creates the illusion of being confined to a certain period of time.

When enlightened, the soul discovers its identity with the Absolute Self and becomes the very embodiment of infinity and eternity.

O Rama, *Brahman* alone exists. On *Brahman* the *jiva* and the world are superimposed due to ignorance. As long as ignorance is not destroyed by knowledge, one continues to experience the world-process, where in fact there is nothing but *Brahman*.

Section 213—*Dialogue between Guru and Disciple*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, your Rama-incarnation manifests in every Treta Yuga. In your previous embodiment you were Rama, and I was your Guru Vasistha. As

in your present embodiment, after developing dispassion you approached me in my forest dwelling and asked spiritual questions.

(Note: Every cycle of creation has its prototypes. In every Treta Yuga, there manifests a disciple like Rama, and a guru like Sage Vasistha. And Rama, having received instructions from Sage Vasistha, attains enlightenment.)

I will relate to you this ancient dialogue that took place between guru and disciple:

Disciple asked: O Guru, I have developed a serious doubt regarding this world. I want to know what is destroyed in *maha pralaya* (cosmic dissolution) and what is not destroyed?

Guru said: O child, just as a dream city merges in the deep sleep state and becomes the very self of the person, in the same manner, this world merges in *Brahman* during *maha pralaya*. Therefore, this world is of the nature of *Maya*—its creation and dissolution, being like dream and sleep, do not affect the Self.

In that state of cosmic dissolution nothing survives. The earth, the stars, the directions, the sequence of events, the beings, the very time itself—all these are destroyed. Even the *akasha* (the ether element) merges in the Non-manifest (*Maya*).

There is neither enjoyer nor objects to be enjoyed in the state of *pralaya*. Even the great divinities—Brahma, Vishnu

and Shiva—do not exist. The Ether of Pure Consciousness alone remains.

Disciple asked: O Sage, what is unreal has no existence. What is real cannot cease to be. This being so, what happens to this vast creation?

Guru said: O disciple, this world is unreal even while it appears. It is the unreal world that merges in the unreal *Maya*. For the sage who is enlightened, the creation does not exist in the three periods of time. *Brahman* alone is.

Where does the mirage water vanish? Where does the dream world subside? Since these did not exist, the question, "Where did they go?" does not arise. In the same way, this world is a mere appearance in *Brahman*.

On waking, one sees the dream world vanish. In the same manner, on attaining enlightenment one develops a vision that negates the reality of the world.

O Rama, the Self, without losing its essential purity, sustains the appearance of the world. The creation and dissolution of the world are like forming and unforming clouds that do not affect the Ether of the Self.

Before entering a lake, you see yourself reflected in the lake. There is an apparent duality—yourself and your reflection. When you enter the lake, that duality is removed. The reflected image merges in the real you. In the same manner, this reflected image—the *jiva*—merges in *Brahman* in the state of enlightenment.

Disciple asked: If the world is a mere appearance, then even during *pralaya* should it not be possible for some *jivas* to experience the world?

Guru said: Your understanding is correct. Even in *pralaya*, the sons of Indu created their different world-systems. Their world-systems were observed by Brahma—the creator—even when he had brought about the dissolution of his creation. This was possible because the world-systems are illusory in nature.

A world-system that appears real to some souls is unreal for other souls. Therefore, these world-systems are illusory in nature.

As long as the mind is conditioned by ignorance, the world-system continues to exist. But when the mind is enlightened, all this is perceived as *Brahman*.

Brahman is all this. He is the God of gods. He is the Seer, the Enjoyer, and the Doer. Since He is the mountain, you may say that the mountain is the Seer, the Doer, and the Enjoyer. In the same manner, every object that you see is, in reality, *Brahman*. Just as every wave is the same as the ocean, in the same way, every object is the same as *Brahman*.

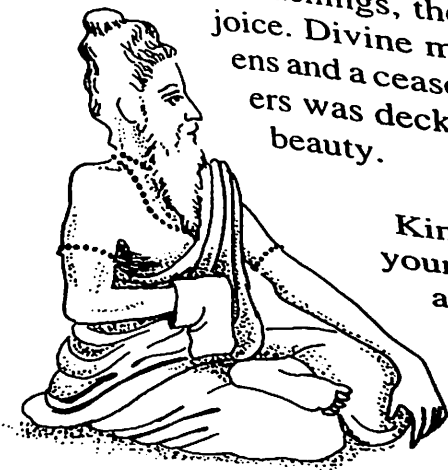
(In a cinema show, the screen is the same behind every projected image, whether there be a projection of a mountain, a river, a cloth, or a pot. The reality behind these is nothing but the screen. In the same way, the reality behind the smallest and the biggest objects of the world is nothing but Brahman.)

O Rama, thus a prototype of Rama had received teachings from a prototype of Vasistha in the previous *kalpa*. Keeping in view the fact that *Brahman* is the reality behind me and you, it may as well be said that "you" had received teachings from "me" in the previous *kalpa* and, in fact, in countless *kalpas*.

Thus teachings have been imparted again and again from a Vasistha to a Rama—from a guru to a disciple. O Rama, presently you have heard all the teachings. The darkness of ignorance has been dispelled from your mind. Now, you should perform your duties as a king with an inner awareness of your Divine identity.

Section 214—*Rejoicing at the Conclusion of the Divine Teachings*

Sage Valmiki said: O Bharadwaja, at the conclusion of Sage Vasistha's teachings, the Divine beings began to rejoice. Divine music manifested in the heavens and a ceaseless shower of celestial flowers was decking the earth with a heavenly beauty.



King Dasharatha said: O Sage, by your Divine teachings, our spirits are ready to enter the abode of Absolute Bliss. We who have been wandering through the thorny paths of the world for a long, long time have now found rest in the Self.

Just as the silvery clouds find their rest on the summits of the Himalayan Mountains, in the same way, we now abide in *Brahman*.

We have attained the highest goal of our self-effort. All that was to be attained has been attained. We have witnessed the end of all sorrows and miseries. We have known the highest Self, and now we abide in *Brahman*.

Sri Rama said: O Sage, your words have delighted me as if I have been bathed in showers of nectar. Though I abide in *Brahman*, yet, recalling your words again and again, I experience a Divine thrill in my body.

Now I have realized that nothing is gained or lost by the performance or non-performance of actions. I am ever the same—the Supreme Absolute.

By listening to your teachings, I have discovered the vision that grants supreme rest. Lo! I have attained the abode of infinite rest! How can a person attain this spiritual vision without your grace? How can a child cross an ocean without a ship? You have provided me the ship that has taken me across the ocean of the world-process.

Sri Lakshmana (Rama's brother) said: Today, the knowledge we have received from the teachings of Sage Vasistha has destroyed the doubts that have persisted in the unconscious through numerous embodiments.

The countless good karmas of past lives have now borne their fruit. Today, I have discovered the bliss of the Self that shines like the full moon in the ether of my heart.

How miserable are those who are deprived of this Divine vision! They have become like dry logs of wood to be consumed by the fires of the world-process.

Sage Vishwamitra said: O, how fortunate are we to have received this sacred wisdom from the lips of Sage Vasistha. We have as if bathed in the purifying waters of the Ganges River a thousand times, and we are therefore supremely purified.

Sage Narada said: Never before did I hear such sublime teachings in Brahma Loka, in the heavenly worlds, or on this earth. My ears have become supremely pure by listening to these nectarine words of wisdom.

Shatrughna (another brother of Rama) said: O Sage, by your teachings I am immersed in the ocean of supreme bliss. I have attained supreme peace. Abiding in the Self, I have become the very embodiment of bliss.

King Dasharatha said: It was due to countless good karmas from past lives that we had the privilege of listening to the teachings of Sage Vasistha. We have become supremely purified.

Sage Vasistha said: O King, now listen to what I have to say. It is customary to worship the *brahmins* after listening to the teachings of the scriptures. Therefore, please worship the *brahmins* by giving bounteous gifts to them, and thus attain the fullness of the knowledge of this great scripture (*Yoga Vasistha*) which I have imparted to you all.

At this, King Dasharatha sent out messengers to invite thousands of *brahmins* from different parts of his kingdom. On their arrival, the king worshipped them and bestowed on them an abundance of gifts.

Then, the king performed a special worship for the gods and departed forefathers. In addition, through gifts and kind acts, he honored the kings (who had come to attend the teachings), the inhabitants of his royal city, his own ministers, attendants and servants. Of course, the poor, blind, and disabled were all fed and given generous presents.

King Dasharatha, who was enjoying the bliss of *Brahman*, continued to celebrate that wondrous attainment for seven days and nights by giving food, bestowing gifts, and distributing wealth among countless recipients.

Section 215—*Sage Valmiki Gives His Concluding Remarks*

Sage Valmiki said: O Bharadwaja, thus having received the instructions of Sage Vasistha, Sri Rama attained enlightenment and became free of grief.

O disciple, may you follow the example of Rama. Having intensified the knowledge of the Self and renounced the pleasures of the world, enjoy the blissful state of *jivanmukti* (liberation in life).

O Bharadwaja, you were already in the possession of a pure mind, and now having listened to the teachings of *Yoga*

Vasistha, even the last shred of doubt has been dispelled from your mind.

Even if a young boy were to listen to this great scripture, he would attain enlightenment. What to speak of you who are a highly advanced aspirant!

By receiving spiritual instructions from sages and saints, by serving them with devotion, by reflecting upon the teachings of *Yoga Vasistha*, any spiritual seeker will attain enlightenment, even as Rama and others did.

Attachments and illusions are strong fetters that have enchained the soul of the ignorant. However, by listening to this scripture, those fetters are broken loose. The soul, discovering its essential nature, attains oneness with the Absolute.

Even one who has developed a dull state of spiritual aspiration will be led to attain enlightenment if he were to listen to these teachings expounded by his guru.

Those who have studied this scripture under the guidance of their guru and then have recited it before the seekers of knowledge will surely attain the highest. They will not be born any more.

Even those who recite this scripture with only the motive of gaining virtuous karmas will attain heavenly worlds, and within a few embodiments will attain enlightenment. This scripture is the giver of heavenly enjoyments as well as liberation.

In ancient times Lord Brahma accepted this scripture composed by me (Sage Valmiki). Having studied it thoroughly, he declared the authenticity of its teachings before the assembly of sages and asserted that "My words, as well as the words of Valmiki and Vasistha will never be rendered untrue."

An aspirant, having completed the study of listening to this great scripture, should adore *brahmins* by giving food and suitable gifts. This form of holy ritual enhances the purity of intellect and renders the study highly meritorious and fruitful.

O Bharadwaja, I have thus recited before you this holy scripture containing many stories, parables and illustrations. Having listened to this, you attained enlightenment. Established in *Brahman*, may you continue to perform your daily duties, decking your life with the indescribable splendor of liberation.

Section 216: *The Conclusion*

Sage Valmiki said: O King Arishtanemi, I have thus related to you the scripture of *Yoga Vasistha*, which I first taught to my disciple, Bharadwaja. By following the path shown by this scripture you will surely attain the Supreme Self.

King Arishtanemi said: O Sage, the vision that has been revealed by you is the destroyer of bondage. By that gracious

vision I have already crossed over the ocean of the world-process.

(Having related all that passed between Sage Valmiki and Arishtanemi) Deva Duta said to the heavenly *apsara*: O Suruchi, having listened to the narrative between Sage Valmiki and Arishtanemi, I was thrilled. That Divine teaching has removed the veil of ignorance from my heart. I have as if drunk the heavenly nectar to my heart's content. After taking leave of Sage Valmiki and King Arishtanemi, I hastened to communicate all this to you. Now with your permission may I proceed to the palace of Indra.

Suruchi said: Adorations to you, O Divine Messenger. I am enjoying supreme contentment by listening to the wondrous teachings you have related to me. I have attained the highest fulfillment of my life. All my sorrows have fled. Now I will enjoy peace at all times. May you prosper forever! Now you may proceed to your destination with all my good wishes.

(Having related all that passed between Devaduta and Suruchi) Agniveshya said to Karunya: Having thus listened to the teachings of *Yoga Vasistha*, Suruchi—the heavenly *apsara*—abode on the summits of the Himalayas and passed her time reflecting upon the nature of *Brahman*.

O Son, have you listened to this wondrous teaching? Has your doubt been dispelled, relating to whether knowledge or action is the means to liberation?

Karunya said: O Sage, having attained the knowledge of the Self, now there is nothing to be thought of, nothing to be described, nothing to be seen. This whole world has become like a mirage for me. For me no purpose is served either by performing action or by abandoning it. I have performed all that is to be performed. However, I will continue performing my daily duties for the wellbeing of all.

(Having related all that passed between Agniveshya and Karunya) Sage Agasti told his son, Sutikhshna: Having listened to these teachings, Karunya attained enlightenment. He had no longer any doubt regarding whether action or knowledge is the means to liberation.

Bowing down before his guru, Sutikhshna said: O Sage, by your grace, ignorance, along with its effect—the world-process, has been destroyed. I have attained the highest knowledge—the knowledge of *Brahman*. Just as the lamp in a theater is a mere witness to all the dramatic performances, in the same way, the Self, though illumining all, is a mere witness to the world-process.

Golden ornaments have different names and forms, but the gold is ever unaffected by them. In the same way, *Brahman* is the reality, unaffected by the names and forms of the world.

Just as waves rise and fall without affecting the ocean, in the same way, world-systems rise and fall in the Ocean of *Brahman*. The appearance and disappearance of the world does not affect the fullness of *Brahman*.

I will perform my duties with my mind fully immersed in *Brahman*. By the grace of guru I have attained all that is to be attained. I am eternally indebted to my guru.

Let disciples serve their guru by dedicating themselves in body, mind and speech. O Sage, by your grace I have crossed over the ocean of illusion. The bliss emanating from my heart has drowned this world of appearance. I am free of all doubts.

This entire world is nothing but *Brahman*. From *Brahman* this world has proceeded, by *Brahman* the world is sustained, and into *Brahman* this world dissolves. To that *Brahman* I offer my adorations!

Adorations to *Brahman*, the blissful, the giver of supreme bliss, the embodiment of Pure Consciousness, beyond the pairs of opposites, vast like the ether, knowable by meditation upon the great utterance, "Thou Art That." Adorations to Sage Vasistha, who is indeed *Brahman*, one without a second, eternal, pure, immutable, the witnessing Self abiding in all beings, beyond the changes and the three *gunas* (modes of Nature)!



About Swami Jyotirmayananda and His Ashram

Swami Jyotirmayananda was born on February 3, 1931, in a pious family in Dumari Buzurg, District Saran, Bihar, India—a northern province sanctified by the great Lord Buddha. From his early childhood he showed various marks of future saintliness. He was calm and reflective, compassionate to all, and a constant source of inspiration to all who came in contact with him. Side by side with his studies and practical duties, he reflected upon life's deeper purpose.

An overwhelming feeling to serve humanity through a spiritual life led him to embrace the ancient order of *Sanyasa* on February 3, 1953, at the age of 22. Living in the Himalayan retreats by the sacred River Ganges, he practiced intense austerities. In tireless service of his Guru, Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj, Swamiji taught at the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy as a professor of religion. In addition to giving lectures on the Upanishads, Raja Yoga and all the important scriptures of India, he was the editor of the *Yoga Vedanta Journal*. Ever able to assist foreign students in their understanding of Yoga and Vedanta, his intuitive perception of their problems endeared him to all.

Swamiji's exemplary life, love towards all beings, great command of spiritual knowledge, and dynamic expositions on Yoga and Vedanta philosophy attracted enormous interest all over India. He frequently lectured by invitation at the All India Vedanta Conferences in Delhi, Amritsar, Ludhiana, and other parts of India.

In 1962, after many requests, Swami Jyotirmayananda came to the West to spread the knowledge of India. As founder of Sanatan Dharma Mandir in Puerto Rico (1962-1969), Swamiji rendered unique service to humanity through his regular classes, weekly radio lectures in English and in Spanish, and numerous TV appearances.

In March 1969, Swamiji moved to Miami, Florida, and established the Ashram that has become the center for the international activities of the Yoga Research Foundation. Branches of this organization now exist throughout the world, and spread the teachings of yoga to aspirants everywhere.

In 1985, Swamiji founded the International Yoga Society ashram near New Delhi, India, and, in 2000, another in Bihar,

India. The International Yoga Society serves the community through yoga classes, by publishing the Hindi journal, *Yoganjali*, and by operating free medical clinics, as well as the Bal Divya Jyoti Public School, and the Lalita Jyoti Anathalaya (orphanage).

Today Swami Jyotirmayananda occupies a place of the highest order among the international men of wisdom. He is well recognized as the foremost proponent of Integral Yoga, a way of life and thought that synthesizes the various aspects of the ancient yoga tradition into a comprehensive plan of personality integration.

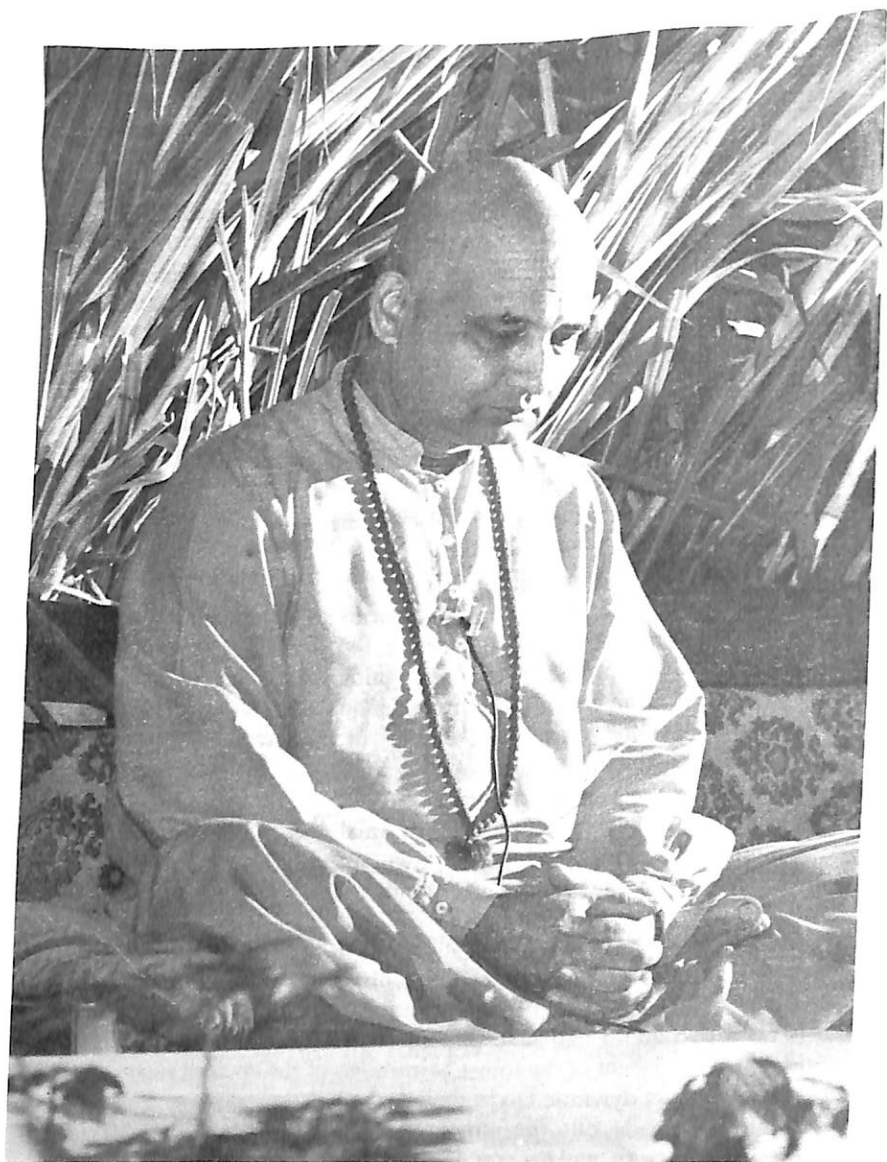
Through insightful lectures that bring inspiration to thousands who attend the conferences, camps and philosophical gatherings, Swamiji shares the range and richness of his knowledge of the great scriptures of the world.

His monthly magazine—*International Yoga Guide*—is enjoyed by spiritual seekers throughout the world. His numerous books, cassette tapes are enriching the lives of countless aspirants who have longed for spiritual guidance that makes the most profound secrets of yoga available to them in a manner that is joyous and practical.

Despite the international scope of his activities, Swamiji still maintains an intimate setting at his main Ashram in Miami studying and working under his direct guidance. In the lecture hall of the Foundation, Swami Jyotirmayananda personally conducts an intense weekly schedule of classes in Bhagavad Gita, Yoga Vasistha, Mahabharata, Raja Yoga, Upanishads, Panchadashi, the Bible, Hatha Yoga and meditation.

With a Work/Study Scholarship, qualified students are able to attend all classes conducted by Swamiji tuition-free. In return, students devote their energy and talents to the Foundation's noble mission.

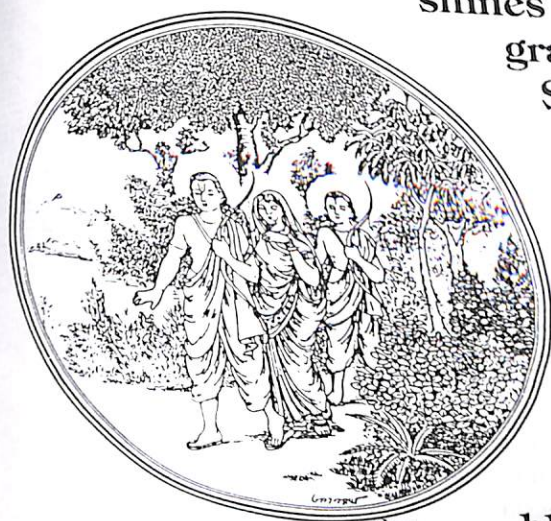
The Yoga Research Foundation lies in the southwest section of Miami, five minutes from the University of Miami and 15 minutes from the Miami International Airport. The main Ashram is on a two and a half acre plot surrounded by trees and exotic plants, reminiscent of the forest hermitages of the ancient sages. In this serene yet dynamic environment, the holy presence of Swami Jyotirmayananda fills the atmosphere with the silent, powerful message of Truth, and the soul is nurtured and nourished, allowing for a total education and evolution of one's inner Self.



Author Swami Jyotirmayananda

From ancient times, the devotional beauty of the epic story of Rama has given untold inspiration and delight to countless aspirants. In *Mysticism of the Ramayana*, the subtle philosophical implications of this colorful epic are illumined by Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda's spiritual insight, and the infinite grandeur of the Ramayana truly shines forth. In the

gracious light of Swamiji's vision, all spiritual seekers will soar on the wings of devotion and wisdom to the highest summits of spiritual bliss!



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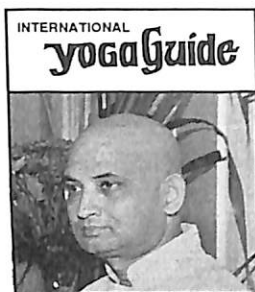
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